

"CREATURES OF INHERITANCE"—BY BENJAMIN HOLLAND.

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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

In this number a weird mystery yarn—a story of caste in England—a career-vs.-marriage story—a humorous tale of opera bouffe war—several clever society stories—and a lot more.

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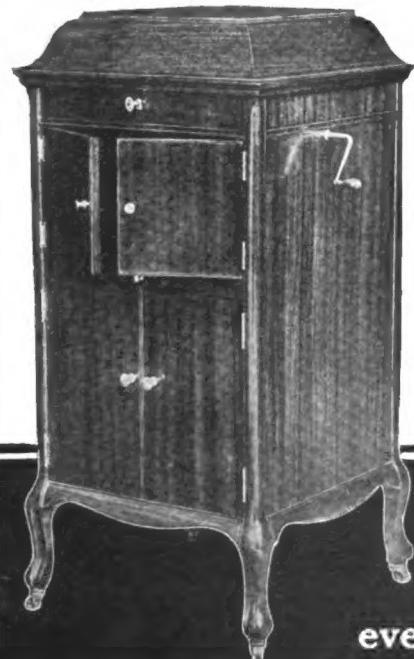
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Vol. XXXII

THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

No. 4

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CREATURES OF INHERITANCE

By BENJAMIN HOLLAND

SURELY no step ever seemed so easy and inevitable as this one of my marriage; probably none was ever more foolhardy and reckless.

There are times, even now, when looking back I wonder with a sort of petrified amazement that any rational being could bring himself to an adventure so certainly foredoomed.

But there is in the aspect of marriage something so respectable and inviting that a man is persuaded to it even in his saner moments. And in spite of the romance which persistently clings about the mating of two vagrant personalities, it is terribly and indubitably true that few marriages are made from natural proclivity; that custom, convenience, the strange dispositions of circumstance compel the individual forward; that a blind fatality directs one to the decisive act.

To say that when I married Bettina I was unprepared for a certain too sharp brilliancy, a species of sparkling newness, ill matched with my own slow sobriety, would be unfair both to her and to myself. She was Tom Forseth's daughter. You remember Big Tom Forseth, the "good feller," the henchman of Tammany, the "brother of the destitute"? Ex-waiter, saloon keeper, gambler, politician, in ten years by questionable and obscure means he got together millions. He was an adept in pandering to the vices and degradation of the miserable beings he ostensibly befriended. He coined money from drunkenness, debauchery, bad tenements, foul pavements; and he sat night after night holding the hand of some dying wretch, praying with some priest, providing for the widows and the fatherless. In the

long battle of the poor he uplifted with one hand while he oppressed with the other. He was the resort of the outcast, the unhappy, the downtrodden; he comforted them singly while he bled them universally. He understood them, for he had been born among them.

There was something immensely admirable about him, along with something thoroughly despicable. And he rose slowly, tortuously, perilously, dragging after him an army of dependents. At last he breathed. His feet might be in the mire, but his head was in clear ether of enormous riches. This man was Bettina's father.

My second cousin, Maude Livingston, who was always so hard up that she would, I believe, have borrowed clothes from her maid, endeavored to launch Bettina and Bettina's mother into the cold waters of the social sea. It was a talent of Maude's in other days to discover and exploit with the most assiduous grace those hapless persons who were at once rich and friendless.

Fortunately Mrs. Forseth — they called themselves Forsythe then — had the good taste not to be long in making her adieu to a world not overcordial. She died, as she had lived, with a sort of weak disparagement of so turning the attention of others, even momentarily, to herself, and without causing any inconvenience to anyone.

She had been a huge woman, pathetically curious, ignorant and generous. I suppose she had once washed dishes, hung out clothes and paused to scold Bettina with her soapy, red, fat hands held high in the air, as she always held them when ponderously excited. Neither money nor an indeterminate modi-

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cum of celebrity had been able to erase from her features the stamp of hard work and of recurrent maternity. She had had five other children beside Bettina, and each one poverty combined with neglect had hurried out of existence.

As for Forsythe, or Forseth, himself, he was killed outright in a railroad collision while rushing from the West to his wife's funeral. He had had dreams of the Presidency.

Only Bettina remained, a small figure in somber black, crowned with an aureole of unlimited dollars. No being was ever more exquisitely pretty. It seemed an impossibility that Forsythe and his wife could have produced anything so alluring, so fragile, so ethereal. Imagination could not take in the fact that she had been born in one of those loathsome streets east of Third Avenue, at the top of four crazy flights of stairs in a dark room amid dirt, squalor and pestilence. If she had had behind her generations of gentlefolk she could not have been to the outward eye more perfectly conceived for luxury and for that station in the world which is commonly termed aristocratic.

My cousin Maude was not long in calling my attention to this, and to other desirable considerations. I remember perfectly what she said to me. It was not her way, in dealing with family matters, to speak with any pleasant circumlocution.

"She's a picture! And the money, Bremer—great heavens, the money! I have means of knowing that it is *at least* thirty millions. And no family to go with it! And you know what a state you're in—what a state we're all in!"

I did know, only too well. There is no need of going into details connected with the financial affairs of a family none of whose members had ever done anything or ever would do anything, and whose original resources had been steadily diminished by the extravagances of the last two generations.

Aside from this, I had come to that time in life when marriage appeals to a man as something settled and suitable,

a way out of all perplexities and disappointments. It seems to invite one to a calm prospect and a station on a hilltop.

Within a year I married Bettina and took her away with me to England and the Continent. She was then just eighteen years of age.

I loved my wife. I do not deny that her fortune was not unwelcome; but it is true that I loved her, and would not otherwise have married her. It seemed to me that the assured distinction which I could offer her well offset the material benefits which she brought me. I hoped that patience, association and the constant suggestions of the new life about her would win her eventually to sympathy with my own ideals and gradually fit her for the position she was to occupy.

But, alas, no two persons were ever so ill adapted to one another as Bettina and myself! A difference of fifteen years in our outlook upon the world was the least of those disparities which divided us. Hardly a month of married life had passed, a month spent in the most luxurious hotels and traveling in the most recklessly expensive fashion, when I was convinced that no man and woman ever set out upon the business of wedded life with smaller chances of success and happiness. I looked ahead of me with blank despair. If I could have found some solid ground beneath my feet upon which to build the wretched structure of mutual readjustment, I should have taken hope; but our existence from the first was tossed amid inconstant winds and currents, borne hither and thither without any definite course or end, a prey to all the trivialities, the ever-recurring discords, the endless ennui of immoderate leisure and unlimited money.

So the honeymoon waned, and we returned to face our future.

Far from drawing us nearer to each other, time as it went on succeeded only in creating between us a wider and wider gulf. There are no individuals so far apart as those who are married and who yet have no common agreement in matters of everyday life, no

means of mutual comprehension but the heart-wearying one of futile discussion.

My wife's fits of temper, her ability—I might almost say her positive genius—in making a scene upon any and every occasion, her floods of tears at every reproach or command, her neglect of social duties, her apathy toward even her own household in two years had torn from her all those pleasant illusions with which my fancy had at first adorned her. As for myself, she had come to regard me no doubt as a bitter medicine administered to her by an unkind Providence. I had long since left off trying to divine her exact sentiments or thoughts—if she had any.

If we had had children in those first two years, it is possible that things might have been different. But Bettina had that frightened disinclination for motherhood which seems a part of the modern woman. And I gave a chilled acquiescence. We lived in a large and very handsome house, well run indeed, because Bettina could afford an excellent housekeeper; silent, because Bettina refused to entertain; empty of everything that goes to make a home, because it seemed that my wife herself was devoid of woman's greatest charm—a talent for home making.

One evening we were dining together in stolid silence, our lips sealed in that icy dumbness of mutual misconception which had risen like a cloud between us. It was always I who broke these silences. When I could no longer stand it, I spoke. To Bettina conversation seemed an unnecessary detail of life. It was her way when she was displeased to say nothing. No one had a more remarkable faculty of muteness. I glanced at her across the table when she could not see me. But she paid no attention to me; she appeared to have a good appetite. Finally I said:

"I have had a letter from Amelia."

Amelia is my niece. She was twenty-one at that time, a year older than Bettina. My brother, Honoré McLean, was fool enough to marry an opera singer. She ruined him, then left him and afterward shot herself

one day at Baden. Honoré, who had followed her, died like a pauper, and with a last wave of his thin hand left me Amelia.

My wife raised her eyes.

"Yes," I continued, "she will be here tomorrow. Honoria is stopping over in Boston to consult Deland. Amelia is coming straight on."

Bettina was thoroughly awakened; there was a flash from beneath those long, curving lashes.

"She has probably had enough of tutelage."

"I cannot imagine why you say that."

"Can't you? Your niece is no longer a child—though you think her so. And your sister is no cheerful companion. She has lost sympathy with the world. Why does she not enter a convent?"

"Because she has no talent for that sort of life. She has taken to religion as other people take to drugs, merely in order to forget. But she does not succeed. Her perceptions are as keen and lively as ever. She is no dull companion. I am sure Amelia enjoyed being with her."

"Does she say so?" asked my wife.

"As usual," I answered, "she says nothing but mere facts. She will arrive on the six o'clock train. Send Cooper to the station to meet her, and I hope that you will stay at home to welcome her. Unfortunately, I shall have to be out of town."

"Oh, I'll stay," said Bettina. "I've nothing to do."

No remark my wife ever uttered aggravated me more than this. A woman in her position should have every hour of her day filled, yet Bettina was continually saying that she had "nothing to do." What, in fact, did she do with herself? I had no idea. Doubtless she spent most of her time at the milliner's and at the dressmaker's; she was inordinately fond of dress, of fal-lals and jewels and chiffons, and had more clothes than any woman I ever knew.

"Bettina," I went on, "I wish that you would put yourself out to be nice to Amelia. If she has recovered from

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her—er—unfortunate delusion, it is only right—”

Bettina interrupted with a lift of her brows. “By which you mean—”

“You know very well,” I returned quickly, “why I sent Amelia abroad with my sister. She imagined she was in love with that man, that cad of a Socialist, Franz Richter. I hoped that a year of absence would put some sense into her head.”

“She was in love with him. Why should she not marry him?”

“That is absurd.”

“Why? He has enough money now to support her. Some old woman, that Miss Knight who was interested in his settlement work, left him what you call a competency—enough to live on. He is building some sort of house out in the country. He is not bad-looking. A great many people know him.”

“I cannot see what all that has to do with Amelia’s marrying him. People know whoever amuses them. He is not the sort of person a woman in one’s family could marry.”

“I see nothing against him.”

“Because you do not wish to. He is an upstart—though I hate the word. Besides that, he is a German. No one knows anything about him.”

“You are cold, Bremer. You have no sympathy. You do not care whether people are in love or not.”

I looked at her. She was very pretty, very enchanting in the candlelight. Her dress, her hair, her delicate figure melted into the rich gloom of the dining room. She was a flower far more fragile, far more exotic than those scattered on the lace cloth between us. All that house, with its thousand luxurious devices, was but a setting which relieved her beauty. She sat there, resting her pink elbows on the table, while she held suspended above her lips an immense red cherry. Her little teeth met on it deliciously, and from the corner of her lips a tiny trickle of juice the color of blood flowed over her white skin. She laughed. And I sat watching her, filled with God knows what thoughts.

“You misunderstand me,” I said

after a time. “There are many sorts of love. When one is young one is apt to make mistakes. No one believes more than I do in marriages ‘for love,’ when such are possible; but whether it is the real thing or not depends—”

“On what?” asked Bettina quietly.

“On the person in question, I think. One can have in the end no real love for a being totally out of one’s own sphere, with whom one has not a sympathy or an interest in common. In such a case it would turn out to be nothing but a delusion. One must have a certain respect for one’s family, an appreciation of one’s position.”

She held her head up quickly, and her mouth drew into a straight, wicked, little line. “Oh, thank you! It is a wonder that you had no more respect for your position!”

“Bettina,” I retorted, angered at last, “do not show any worse breeding than you can’t help. You act like a child. I made no reference to you, so why take an impersonal remark to yourself?”

“If the cap fits—” she began.

“For heaven’s sake,” I cried, “do not quote vulgar proverbs to me!” And I continued quickly, fearful of the inevitable flood of tears: “It is impossible that Amelia, with her associations, her upbringing and her really fine mind, should love such a man as Richter, a middle class German, a Socialist, an agitator, a—”

“At any rate, a *man!*” snapped Bettina.

“Oh, I grant you,” I rejoined, “he is thick enough and broad enough and tall enough, if that is what you mean. He is big enough, in all conscience—vulgar, coarse-grained, loud-mouthed! How Amelia— But I always said it was a most unwise thing for her to go into settlement work. One should leave dabbling in filth to those who make a profession of it.”

“You forget that I was born in those circumstances which you call—filth. Necessarily I have a better knowledge of them than you. They may pain, but they do not contaminate.”

“Possibly. I cannot see what that

has to do with the present conversation."

"You prefer not to see a great many things—"

"And to forget them," I said with an accent of finality.

"Did it ever occur to you," she went on coldly, "how Richter—"

I opened my eyes. "Amelia is a beauty!"

My wife paused with her lips on the edge of her wine glass. "You think so?"

"She is certainly," I admitted thoughtfully, "the most beautiful woman I have ever known. You never saw her mother. You were too young. But you have heard of her. She was Alexandra Durnovo, a Russian, and the most wonderful creature that God or the devil ever made! Amelia is so like her that you could take the photograph of one for the other."

Bettina's hand shook, and a little of the wine spilt on her dress.

"Be careful!" I exclaimed. "Your gown—"

"It is a rag!" cried Bettina savagely. She rose suddenly from the table. "I don't want anything more."

"Sit down," I said firmly. "What is the matter with you? Bettina—"

She was gone. I heard the swish of her skirts in the hall, the sound of her sobs as she stifled them, the quick patter of her retreating feet.

I finished dining alone—or, rather, I sat looking at each thing as it was put before me. I made the usual excuses to the servants. I felt, as I had felt so many times before, the petty, degrading makeshift of our married life, which could not deceive even the gaze of underlings.

Dinner, the only meal at which we met, was often broken up by a scene of this sort; indeed, this was a rather mild example. She chose to take a sudden dislike to my praise of Amelia's good looks—Amelia, who still seemed to me a child! Why, heaven knew, I had long since been certain that Bettina had not the slightest affection for me; indeed, to mention affection and Bettina in the same breath in connection with myself

came near to the ridiculous. I verily believed she often hated me, hated me with that intensity of unreasoning hatred of which only women and animals are capable. I had seen it in the slant of her hard, blue eyes, in the whole instantaneous revulsion of her form whenever I chanced to approach her.

Now in a black mood of despair, of bewilderment, of dreariness, I sat looking at her empty chair. I perceived with dull recognition that it was indicative of our life, this lonely table in the center of a vast room, adorned with glittering and useless things and carefully designed to coax reluctant appetite. The cloth was never spread here for healthy, normal satisfaction. So for us the savor had gone out of life; we were turning from it in disgust. Day after day we retreated further from each other in misunderstandings, in hostilities, in silences. Dress it up as you will, married life remains the same, and the relations of man and woman cannot change. We are of such clay that it is probable that we need the daily small interests of what is called moderate circumstances to mold two into one. If I had been careful not to expect too much of marriage, at least I had not looked for utter ruin. I had not counted on that unprotection which is the penalty of great riches, and in which, shorn of services, duties and responsibilities, emotions clash against emotions for lack of all other activity. I began to comprehend it now with that first wretched comprehension of an evil unalterable.

When at last I returned to the library I found Bettina seated in a deep chair before the fire, her feet stretched out in front of her on a cushion. She had exquisite feet and ankles, and was well aware of them. What she spent a year in clothing those bits of flesh and bone would have kept an ordinary family in food. Coming up behind her quietly, I stood looking down at her, at the airy artifice of her dark hair, in curls and ringlets and loose, long waves, at the firm, young curves of her shoulders, at the supple lines of her figure, at the

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little satin-clad feet. My heart melted as I saw them. All the bitter failure of our life came over me. I remembered Bettina in the early morning after our marriage in the gray light of a shuttered room thrusting one small, pink foot out of bed that I might clothe it in a golden slipper.

I knelt down beside her, and took her hand in mine.

"Nina," I whispered, calling her by the little name of our honeymoon, "Nina!"

Her fingers curled tightly about mine, even while she turned her face from me.

"Dear," I pleaded, "why do you act so?"

She began to cry a little. "You're—you're so horrid, Bremer. I don't deserve to be so treated. I never, never was so hurt!"

"Hurt you!" I drew closer to her; she was so lovely, my wife! I leaned my cheek against her bare, sweet shoulder. "How did I hurt you, dear little girl?"

"There never was anything so unjustifiable," gasped Bettina, "so wantonly cruel!"

"But for heaven's sake what, dear?"

"You made such horrid allusions, and you must know they hurt."

"What sort of allusions?"

"I don't like to speak of them."

"But please do."

"About people who marry beneath them."

"Oh! But you are so foolish. You should not connect them with yourself. They have nothing whatever to do with you."

"You make me think you think so."

"But I don't—not for a moment! A woman takes the position of the man she marries. You took mine when I married you. I have forgotten that you ever had any other. Let's not speak of it again."

"And then—"

"Yes?"

"You are always admiring other women."

"Other women?"

"As though you did not think of me

at all. You said she was the most beautiful woman you had ever seen."

"Amelia—you're not jealous of Amelia!"

"Of course I'm not! Why should you think such a thing? But one doesn't like to hear other people's praises all the time—continually! You said—"

I laid my fingers on her lips, and pressing my mouth close to her ear I whispered: "But I thought all the time that my wife was the dearest and the prettiest and the most fascinating of women."

She looked down at me with softened eyes. "Did you really?"

"I did really."

"But Amelia?"

"Is very beautiful," I explained. "But so is the Venus de Milo, and one does not fall in love with her, or think of her in that way at all." My lips brushed her throat. "What an absurd little girl it is!"

She sighed happily; her arm slipped around my neck, and she pressed her cheek against mine. Silently kneeling there, I wondered at myself. I felt the warmth of the fire, the warmth of Bettina's body, and of her sweet breath, like crumpled rose leaves. Mute, astonished, it seemed to me that I was asleep and in a dream. The house was perfectly quiet; I heard only the ticking of the clock and the crackling of the fire in the grate. A new, inexplicably mild atmosphere of home seemed to envelop us. Bettina said nothing, and her silence seemed to me sweeter than any words. Once in a while she trembled, a delicious tremor, which ran from her head to her feet, and to which I responded by clasping my arms closer about her. My mind jumped suddenly from despair to the old fervor I had known in the first days of our marriage. I seemed surrounded with a mist of vague, enchanting hopes, hopes which I believed I had long since ceased to think of, hopes of a new union of love and understanding which might be possible between us. I felt that I forgave, that I had already forgiven all her childish offenses; that they were lost and wiped out in this charming

attitude of tenderness and silence. Had they not been, after all, the offenses of a child? And had I not made too much of them, taken them too much to heart? A little wiser guidance, perhaps, a little more confidence—were not these what was needed in the bewildering mix-up of our life?

I turned toward my wife, clasping her hands in mine. "Dear, we shouldn't have been snapping and snarling. We have gotten into bad ways lately. What has been wrong between us?"

She sat up, smiling a little. "I hope I've neither snapped nor snarled, Bremer—though I'm not sure *you* didn't. You are so impatient with me."

"I wasn't impatient with you, dear. Sometimes it is hard to see—what you mean. I didn't understand why you should fly off that way, all at once, and jump down my throat about Amelia."

"It was foolish. But you are always thinking of her."

"She has no one else to think of her, or for her."

"And I don't like to share you."

"But you don't have to. I only ask you to share with me my interests—and my worries, too."

She nestled against me. "Ah, I will!"

Would she? One needs a fine instinct in dealing successfully with women—above all, a supreme intuition of the right moment. I did not have it, had never had it. Neither my life nor my inclinations, which had not led me to have much to do with women, had given it to me. I was even pitifully ignorant of those hidden causes which have no connection with reason, and which move all their springs of action. I pressed my wife's hand in mine and raised it to my lips. My natural impulse was to show her at once my belief in her sincerity, to draw her near to me immediately in the bond of a common purpose.

"Then help me now—will you?"

She turned on me her bright eyes with their dilated pupils.

"How?"

"By seeing that Amelia has no chance to meet Richter that you can prevent—by keeping her occupied and happy.

It worries me, really. You're the only one, you see, to whom I can speak about it. And I promised Honore, poor fellow—" My voice broke off in silence. I looked up at her.

She was smiling slightly. "You're still thinking of that?"

"I have to. She comes tomorrow. And I want you to think of it, too—for me."

Her long, slim hand, with its delicate nails, tightened on the arm of her chair.

"I can do very little."

"You are the only one who can help me."

"Ah!"

I never knew what took place behind that impassable face of my wife. I shall never know. While I watched her her eyes clouded, and a veil of something opaque and gray fell between us. She did not draw away, but she turned cold in my clasp. She looked at me with a peculiar expression.

"Very well; I promise that she shall have no opportunity to see him that I can prevent." Her tones fell measured and chill.

I thought that I understood her. And while I thought so, I was as wide from any comprehension of her as it was possible for a poor laughable, tragic fool to be. If we could see women as they are! Among the rich and the higher classes they are bred for our pleasure and our leisure hours. Their sole pursuit is love—love and the thousand subtleties they weave around it, conceived of their idle minds and their unfruitful energies. It is to them an intricate and desperate trade, whose every step is fraught with some portentous peril. The recklessness with which they follow the one business of their lives makes for a perfection of egotism. Vainly and ceaselessly they demand that our hearts be turned to them only, that our minds be devoid of thoughts but for themselves. It is their price. They are the consummate effort of hyper-civilization; they are expensive as only the great luxuries of the world are expensive.

I, too, had my egotism, an egotism which demanded flattery and had long

been starved of it. Now I leaped at it, as a man who is famished snatches at a piece of bread. I construed Bettina's coldness into a sign of her jealousy. And I was glad of that jealousy. My heart warmed itself before it as before a fire. A tingling as of hope pulsed through my whole body. I was lifted up by an agreeable and benignant sense of power. And I was filled with a spirit of perversity.

I bent over Bettina, and kissing her unemotionally on the forehead, said, "I rely upon you, my dear."

She turned her head away from me. "Thank you," she let fall evenly.

If I was dimly conscious of any inward admonition, I did not heed it. I went over to the table and sat down in the chair where I was accustomed to read. There was a great bowl of Russian violets near by, and suddenly I became aware of their odor, which seemed to pervade the whole room. These flowers expressed for me a joy, which I thought I had lost, and which, all at once, had returned into my life. Their perfume was like the zest of living which I was tasting once more after a long time. They spoke to me of all those sweet, sensual, secret things which are the property of married love. I looked over at my wife, and it seemed as though the intensity of my glance must draw her eyes to mine. But she seemed oblivious of me, locked in some world of her own to which I could not penetrate. How frail they look, these charming, delicate, coquettish women; and of what indomitable wills they are possessed; in what dark channels their minds wander, inscrutable, mysterious! She sat there, perfectly still, in the exact position in which I had left her, her feet crossed on the cushion, her head resting on the back of the chair, her hands hanging limply over the arms. Even in her moveless attitude there was grace; about her was such a charm as no uncivil mood of hers could dispel or cloud. As I gazed at her I felt the beating of my heart.

Was it Robert Louis who said, "We must all set our pocket watches by the clock of fate"? If we might believe

that, how easy and how grateful! How far easier than to think our own mad idiocy an element sentient and responsible! While my wife sat there, silent, her back turned toward me, I perceived within myself a strange resentment. Such a resentment often, I believe, accompanies passion, and can be dispelled only by physical caresses. It vanishes at the touch of the beloved hand. But now it bound me. I longed for her; but I was constrained by that unknown force. I was at once desirous and cold. I knew that I should go to her, and that I should tell her that there was nothing—nothing between us; but I put off the time, veiled my own intentions in a mist.

Suddenly she rose, and without glancing at me, walked across the room. Always her movements were the most distinctive thing about her. They expressed her, even more than her eyes or the sound of her voice or the carriage of her small, compact head. They were hurried, often abrupt, but never ungraceful. They revealed that excess of life which was in her, latent but near the surface, and always ready to burst forth into passionate energy. Now my pulses answered to my knowledge of that life.

I stood up. "Are you going to bed?"

She looked at me. "Yes. Good night."

But I did not answer her. Did she know what that meant, my not answering her? I believed that she divined it. She passed out and up the stairs, while I paused upon the threshold, following her with my eyes.

Above her door closed. I returned to the library. All at once I wanted to breathe, to draw into my lungs not the overheated atmosphere of the house, but the brisk cold of outdoors. I opened a window, and stood looking forth into the night. The wind beat against my face, and I welcomed it. I felt young and strong, strong, as a man should, with strength for two, for himself and for the woman who is his. Carriages passed up and down the Avenue, and in the clear, frosty air their lamps twinkled like jewels. At

times the street light near by illuminated the faces of those within. I envied none of them, those men and women seated side by side. Was I not happy, too? I listened to the wind stirring gently among the dead leaves in the Park across the way, and to the subdued movements above, in my wife's room, and it seemed to me that they were both blended and swallowed up in the wide, blessed night.

After half an hour I went quietly up the stairs. The upper hall was silent; it seemed strangely deserted beneath the soft, rose-colored rays that poured from the electric fixtures. I opened the door of my own room and closed it after me. Within everything was in semi-darkness. Only on the dressing table a small lamp, under a silver shade, burned with a dim but steady glow. Stillness rested upon the familiar atmosphere; the common preparations of the night had that air with which they sometimes greet us, that gentle emphasis upon the unchangeableness of human habits and relations. Outlined against the dusk was the film of yellow light which marked the connecting door between my room and my wife's.

I crossed over to that door, and the joyous beating of my heart seemed to fill the world.

I knocked.

I heard my wife talking in a low tone to her maid. I heard her say, "No," in a quick, cold voice.

I knocked again, and there was silence.

"Bettina," I whispered, "it is I. Let me in."

I listened. Nothing moved.

"Bettina!" I said a little louder, and again there was silence.

Then I knocked again, fool that I was, and said again, very softly, but so that she could hear me, "Bettina!"

There was silence. I heard the maid crossing the room, and suddenly the light went out. I listened until I heard her leave the room. Then I gently turned the handle of the door; it was locked. In the darkness I heard my wife breathing quickly and regularly.

While I stood there the blood poured back to my heart, and I turned cold. A black, strong, icy anger engulfed me; I went down in it, and the waves of it rushed over my head. I gazed at that door which was shut and locked against me. I remained there, without knowing why I did so. What did I intend to do? Nothing. What did I expect? I know not. The silence continued.

I cannot tell how long I waited there. After a time I found myself standing before the dressing table, turning up mechanically the flame of the night lamp. The reflection of my own face, haggard and unrecognizable, stared at me from the glass.

II

I HAD no profession. I had been bred to none. For five generations the McLeans had been idlers, and it is doubtful if I should ever have had genuine liking for any sort of pursuit. It is a mistake, I believe, to take it for granted that a man works from preference, or, as we too often do, to exalt work itself as something admirable and altogether necessary. I was no different in manner of life, no better, no worse than the run of my acquaintances. Among the people who made up my intimates, money in vast sums was indispensable, a correlate of mere living; to marry money was a necessity hardly discussed.

The care of my wife's fortune, it seemed to me, gave me sufficient occupation. Bettina knew nothing of money, neither where it came from, how it was kept nor where it went. She never thought of it because she could never remember having needed it. She had never seen anything that she could not buy, and she had never paid for anything with coin out of her purse. Her life touched no realities. She had always only to say, "I wish it."

Her fortune supported my family—supported Maude, who had been divorced three years ago from Jimmy Truell, and Maude's two boys who were at Harvard, and her worthless,

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amiable scamp of a brother with his delicate wife and three children. It made youth a long holiday for Amelia, my brother's child, and for the few months that she had lived after my marriage it had housed in luxury my worldly, weak, handsome mother. Its arms spread out in every direction; and there was no difference in the immensity of it. It was a vast golden god, many-handed, inscrutable, smiling, incapable of decrement, raining coin from its thousand fingers.

Only Honoria would not bow the knee to it, nor hold her cup for the golden stream. She had turned her face from my marriage, and she would not profit by it. It had seemed to her the last abasement of pride. "Bremer," she had said in her sharp, incisive voice, "you are a fool. I pity you." Two-thirds of my own infinitesimally small income went each year to Honoria.

And now, for the first time, I was beginning to taste the bitterness a man has when it is forced home upon him that he gives no material support to his wife; that, in so far as mere living goes—and it goes a long way—she could as well live without him as with him. I commenced to sense dimly that common worries, common needs are what draw two people together; that emotions are transient, easily satiated, volatile, and inconstant; that my own life held in it little of reality. I told myself that the last milestone had been passed on the uneven road which Bettina and I had endeavored to travel together. I looked back on our life with a feeling of crushed despondency, and forward to the future without hope.

The one moving image in the dark region of my thoughts was Amelia. The welfare of my brother's child now seemed to me the one thing for which I had to live. My brain concentrated itself upon that with unhealthy, morbid intensity. During the two days in which I had been away from home, settling one of those involved disputes which arose occasionally between my wife's trustees, I had kept Amelia as a shield between me and more bitter thoughts. For the sake of Honoré's

daughter Bettina and I would maintain an outward show of peace until this young girl, the trust of my dead brother, could be established by some suitable marriage; after that, I cared little—a divorce, a separation—no doubt we could find a way to cut the knot of our difficulties, as many others had done before us.

How many others! As the motor threaded its slow way up the Avenue through the late afternoon press of vehicles, I counted those others as I recognized the familiar faces of the houses—the men and women who had hung together "until the children were married," or who had broken their ties with a fine abandon, or who had drifted slowly but certainly apart! I had once looked upon them with contempt and pity. My marriage was to have been so different from theirs; and it had turned out the same.

The car stopped and I descended. Before me in the chill November air towered the white marble of my own house. It presented a silent, secret face. Cold, impassive, it hid its tragedy, rising arrogantly among its neighbors. And far above, cutting against the yellowing sky, the bronze arches of its cupola pierced fantastically aloft. The cupola had been Forseth's fancy; it alone expressed his exuberance and his vanity. My eye dwelt upon it. Then I went slowly up the steps.

The doors closed after me, shutting out the cheerful tumult of the outer world, engulfing me suddenly in loneliness and silence. In that house nothing appeared to move. The servant who took my hat and coat stepped with careful precision; his feet made no sound. Only the ticking of many clocks was perfectly audible.

He spoke in a low voice; an old dependent, he looked at me furtively and keenly. "Miss McLean is in the library, sir. She wished to see you the moment you returned."

"I will join her," I said, and I crossed the hall quickly. In the doorway I paused. Twilight was descending; the drawn curtains, the shaded candles, the quiet of the room, all suddenly op-

pressed me. I stood still, looking at Amelia, who leaned forward, her back toward me, before an old Venetian mirror, gazing at herself as though she divined the sad mystery of her soul. I saw reflected the perfect oval of her face, scarcely changed by the passage of a year, crowned by its mist of coppery hair, and as delicate as a face in alabaster. Catching sight of me in the glass, she turned, holding out her hands.

"Dear old Hughie, I'm so glad to see you!"

I kissed her cordially on both cheeks. I do not know why Amelia calls me Hughie; it is her particular name for me, and I have never been able to break her of this somewhat childish habit.

"How well you look!" said I. "And not changed in the least."

"A year must make some changes." She glanced toward the mirror. "But one must come home to see them."

"I see none," I answered, still holding her hands, "except that you are lovelier than ever."

She laughed softly. "You're not changed, Hughie! And why weren't you here to meet me?"

"I was away on business, dear child. Something which could not be avoided. But wasn't Bettina here?"

"Ah, yes! Is she ill, Bremer?"

"Ill! She was quite well when I left her."

"She is much changed."

"Quieter, perhaps."

"No. Quite changed. But you see her always; you would not observe it."

I made an impatient gesture. "Really, I see no change in her. She is the same as ever."

Amelia walked to one of the long windows; she stood looking out through the draperies.

"Yes," she said, "everything is the same, isn't it? There's no change; the same cold sky, the same houses, the carriages passing up and down, the endless people. I've dreamed of it so many times—ah, the ache it's been! And now I'm here, looking at it all again, and it doesn't seem to mean so much to me." She paused. "And here in this house nothing is changed."

I understood what she meant. She is possessed of a terrible intuition, inherited perhaps from her Russian mother, which pierces through everything. I was silent.

"My dear Amelia," I returned slowly, "we are as you left us. Did you expect to find us otherwise?" I put out my hand entreatingly. "The great thing in life is to ignore what cannot be bettered."

"Ah! One hopes—"

"Don't mind," I begged. "It's not worth minding now. It's merely a muddle, dear child—not for you to think of. Let's talk about yourself. Come and sit down. Did you have a good time over there with Honoria?"

She came slowly back to me and sat down beside me. With a deft movement of her hand she made one of those arrangements of her flowing skirts in which women excel.

"Oh, yes, the usual thing! I think I sent you picture postcards at decent intervals, and an occasional letter. There's nothing in particular to say about it. I have been three times in the south of France, Hughie, and it palls even upon my imagination. I was an obedient child, was I not, and stayed my year out? And here I am. That's all."

"All?" I queried, and I shook my head at her. "She has a young man follow her about all over Europe—I am told that he ruined three motors in the pursuit—and she ends up by saying, 'That's all'!"

"Wilfred?" mused Amelia with the slightest raising of her brows. Her eyes took on a strange look, as though they gazed at something beyond which dumbly fascinated her.

It is one of our human weaknesses that we think ourselves capable of forming the lives of others, of regulating to our own deliberate piping the violent and unexpected future. That Amelia should marry Wilfred Harmon had always seemed to me, not merely the perfect adjustment of all my anxieties on her behalf, but also the setting of a seal of rectitude upon a life commenced, as hers had been, in such questionable

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circumstances. He had been patiently in love with her for two years; he was a good fellow, one of our own sort, a gentleman, rich with the accumulation of a century. If he was a little dull, perhaps, that did not matter. I looked at Amelia. She turned slowly toward me, and our eyes met.

"It would greatly relieve your mind if I were to tell you that I am to marry Wilfred?"

"Dear child, nothing would delight me more!"

"Be delighted, then," she said somberly. She held out her hand to me. "I have given him my word."

For an instant her cold fingers closed about mine, then she drew them away. Her lids fluttered over hidden eyes. And between us silence fell. I was aware of a sudden lifting of the spirit; relief surged through me. I spoke cheerfully.

"You must have known that I always hoped. It is the best possible of all things! I cannot tell you of my happiness—in yours."

She turned a white face on me. "So I have sealed my fate."

"None could have a happier."

"By submitting to the decision of those wiser than myself."

"My dear, age sees farther than youth. In it you will find your life's happiness."

I longed by a touch to infuse her with courage, and I laid a hand over hers.

"Let it be soon."

Her eyes blazed scorn on me. "That I may not change my mind?"

"That would be impossible. You have pledged yourself."

"And with you I am to keep up the pretense!"

"Of what? I do not understand."

"You are perfection, Bremer!"

"You speak strangely. If it is possible that you have no affection for Wilfred—"

"I pity him!" Her hands clenched themselves in her lap. "I will speak out; you cannot stop me! One is to avoid all the ecstasies and agonies, and, at any cost, keep to the safe path of silence—to hide everything and to say

nothing! That is your way. But I tell you that I can't now!" She lifted her head, and her face, so still, so expressionless before, was flooded with life like a devouring flame. "You wonder if I have forgotten Richter? Oh, don't start; the name is written on your brain, is it not, and trembling on your lips! You wonder if I have recovered from that disease which attacked me, and which you thought would sap every rational tendency of my life! Have I forgotten? No; and sha'n't until I'm dead. My love for him was the one decent thing in all my life!"

I got quickly to my feet. "I beg you—"

Under her level brows she observed me coldly. "Yes, I said 'decent'; and not being decent enough to live up to it, I have let it go."

She was seized with a trembling from head to foot. When she spoke of this man, even after a year, she shivered.

"I had not the courage—a pretty thing to say, is it not?—I had not the courage to love, to suffer, to sacrifice myself, to sink my own personality, my ideals, my habits, my thoughts in the life of another. The virus of our life—the life with which you and I have been surrounded since childhood—had bitten into me too deeply. It poisoned every honest impulse and sapped every loyal instinct. The usage of generations smothered me!" Suddenly she covered her face with her hands. "I had not the courage to hear the call of life!"

"Amelia," I cried painfully, "you are in an overwrought condition! You are worn out from your journey. Dear child, you do not know what you are saying. You have decided to do the best and wisest thing: to marry a man whose ideas, whose principles and environment are like your own. You will forget that unhappy episode of your girlhood; it will retreat farther and farther into the past. Believe me, I understand—"

She turned on me fiercely. "You understand nothing—nothing!"

"I understand, dear child," I said

slowly, "what is best for you. You will forget. It is your duty to forget. You are young. Spring will blossom again in your heart. It is your return which has reawakened all these memories. Over there you felt differently, thought differently."

"You are mistaken. To travel a little cannot change one's heart."

She ceased as one of the servants entered the library. Without our perceiving it, darkness had descended. Deftly and silently he lighted the many lamps in the long room, drew the shades, laid the tea tray on a low stand by the fire and piled new wood upon the bed of embers. The evening papers were placed upon the table, a sheaf of letters methodically arranged; silently, unobtrusively, without glancing at either of us, the man withdrew. I continued my restless walking up and down the room. Amelia sat motionless, her head bent, her dress, of some sheer, silver-gray material, spread out over the red damask of the couch. Beneath it the diamond buckles on her satin shoes scintillated in little points of light.

I paused before her. "My dear," I said, "one may be glad, perhaps, to be born to no high position; one may even shrink from achieving such; but one cannot come down from it without sorrow. This is one of the lessons of life. The one thing now left for you is to put away all thoughts of the past, to forget wisely and absolutely."

"It is the only good thing I have left," she answered, "that I shall never forget."

"Yet you will," I insisted gently. "You will. Everything will conduce to blot it out; your new life, your husband, your home, your position—"

Suddenly she stopped me, her eyes blazing, her face rigid. "Bremer, I protest! For once let us speak the truth, you and I. Position! It is your god, my friend, and you have sacrificed your life to it, and the happiness and faith of your wife. It will repay you by turning to dust and ashes in your mouth. Yet, like myself, you have not the courage to forego it, but are bound and strapped to it hand and foot.

We are creatures of inheritance—you and I—stuffed with sawdust, not with good red blood."

She rose swiftly to her feet. "Oh, if I had a little of my mother in me!"

"Heaven forbid!" I exclaimed, remembering Honoré's wife.

"Yes, if I had a little of my mother's spirit—wicked, baffled creature that she was—a little of the divine spark which makes a woman content to cast away her life—to give without weighing in the balance! But I *could not!* Ah, that's the pain! You see, don't you—I could not—it was not in me!" She threw out her hands with a gesture of resignation, of surrender.

"It seems to me, dear Amelia," I protested, "that you are a little—well, melodramatic."

She looked at me with serious eyes in which pity seemed to mingle with contempt.

"Life, Bremer, is always melodramatic. It is only such as we who are capable of reducing it to the gray level of propriety—and position!"

She moved over to the unheeded tea table. "Will you have some tea, Hughie?"

"No, my dear."

"Nor I. How often do we have tea together in this house; or are at home to have it; or if at home, how often in the mood for it?"

"Not often, my dear."

"What becomes of all the tea we do not drink, Hughie, and all the cakes we do not eat?"

"I suppose the servants have them."

"Smith carries them down to Anne."

"No doubt."

"Then we shall not offend Smith if we don't make tea?"

"It's not absolutely necessary, my dear."

I came and stood beside her, looking down at the fire with its leaping lights, and at her little foot, tapping impatiently against the bronze screen, with its garlands of fat cupids and half open roses.

"This is not a very cheerful house," I said gravely. "And I am not near enough to you, my dear, for you to hold

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me in more than affection. It is right that you should marry early—as soon as possible. It is right that you should pass into an atmosphere of your own. Let us not speak of these things again. Regrets for the unfortunate past are, at this time, not in the best of taste."

"The best of taste!" she broke in. "Oh, if you come to that, marriage itself, I dare say, is not in the best of taste!"

"Amelia!"

"Gracious, Hughie, how easily you are shocked! Unless, as Mrs. General says, 'when free from the trammels of passion, when occurring with the approbation of near relatives, and when cementing the proud structure of the family edifice'!"

"See, my dear," I went on, "how much I care for you, and your happiness, since I speak to you of what I have never acknowledged myself. I have tried to guide you, that you might avoid the unhappiness which I have found intolerable. There are some gulfs which it is folly to attempt to span, and above such marriage is the frailest of all bridges."

She turned upon me quickly. "Bremer, you are blind, inconceivably blind!"

"You do not know of what you speak," I said harshly.

"Ah, do I not? If for once in your life you would open your eyes, if for once in your life you could look beyond your own prejudices—see your wife as she is—"

"I forbid you," I cried with bitter exasperation, "to interfere in the slightest between Bettina and myself. Interfere, did I say? I can hardly use that word, since it is impossible, is it not, to interfere between two persons already completely separated!"

In my wounded perversity I had raised my voice; but at the look of horror in Amelia's eyes I stopped abruptly. Turning, I saw my wife standing in the doorway. She was wrapped in her sables; only the small, bloodless oval of her face showed above the dark collar of fur. Her black brows, shaped like two perfect crescents,

appeared with a startling distinctness against the pallor of her skin, and gave her a strange look of tragic helplessness. She spoke rapidly:

"You are back, Bremer? Pardon me for interrupting you, but are you coming with me, Amelia? We were to be at the Shipleys' at half after five."

She did not even glance at me, but standing erect and motionless in the doorway, seemed to concentrate her gaze on some point far beyond us both.

Amelia, with a few hurried words of acquiescence, left the room.

"Won't you come in and wait?"

My voice fell, curiously subdued; I perceived with intense distinctness the aloofness, the frigidity of her attitude. She emanated repulsion. Still not looking at me, she replied: "I prefer to wait in the carriage. I will go out."

She turned and I followed her. "Allow me to put you in," I said, as I opened the door. She bowed her head slightly, passing out into the cold air.

The first few flakes of snow were sifting down from the gray sky overhead. They melted as they fell, shrouding the world in a dim and sorrowful obscurity. Their chill mist seemed to typify to me the veil which had fallen forever between Bettina and myself. I saw her slim figure moving before me down the steps, not by a bend of the head nor a single motion of the body conveying any knowledge of my presence; and the whole awful futility of our lives swept over me and sank into my heart—the plans never entered into together, the understanding never compassed, the joys and sorrows never shared, the love never attained. I opened the door of the carriage, and she entered. Without speaking, she seated herself and turned her head away from me. I looked at her for a moment, then I closed the door and retraced my steps into the house.

III

I SAW neither Bettina nor Amelia that evening. Drawn into some vortex at the Shipleys', they had hurried home only to dress and go out again. I had

been, fortunately, beyond telephone communication; stepping aimlessly through crowded streets, in one of those long, solitary, troubled wanderings which were fast becoming a habit with me. Finally chancing to end at the club, I ran into Wilfred, and we dined together.

He spoke continuously of Amelia, in a voice which he strove to make level and commonplace. In him she excluded everything else. His love for her had something in it pathetic and extraordinarily pure. He expected so little, was willing to give so much. Large, almost fat, with slow movements and a droll, halting voice, he yet possessed more distinction of character than any man I had ever known. It was impossible not to take him at once for what he was, a gentleman.

He had white, beautifully modeled hands, and expressive eyes; yet, with all the advantages of great wealth and the freedom of no close family connections, he had been guilty of few irregularities; he led, in fact, a life singularly simple.

With some hesitation he produced from an inner pocket a small package wrapped in many folds of tissue paper. His large, tapering fingers undid it slowly and carefully. Inside was a jeweler's box of white brocaded satin, ornamented in one corner with intertwined initials of gold. It held the ring intended for Amelia's finger. In our retired spot, beneath the candlelight, it threw out dull flames of color, a great ruby, magnificently cut and surrounded with diamonds.

"Will she like it?" he asked nervously. His forehead wrinkled in apprehension, and he added, "It is hard to know what she likes." He turned it this way and that, fascinated by the engraving on the inside. In his attitude there was unconscious loneliness. The vast Harmon house on lower Fifth Avenue was already being renovated. The wedding had been set for the early part of February.

It was long after twelve when I left him and walked toward home.

About a block from the house one of

my own carriages passed, and by the glare of the electric light on the sidewalk I caught a glimpse of Bettina and Amelia within. My wife, with her cloak wrapped about her, leaned back in the far corner, and for an instant I saw Amelia's perfect profile turned toward her in the dusk of the brougham. Some distance from me they drew up before the house. Amelia got out quickly. At that moment a man whom I had not seen before approached her, and turning suddenly, she paused to speak to him. Even at that distance I recognized him easily; it was Richter. No one could mistake those heavy shoulders, nor the great height and somewhat stooping posture. I saw Amelia motion impatiently with her hand; she appeared to say a few quick words; then she walked up the steps into the house. As she did so my wife emerged from the carriage. She also paused to speak to Richter, her face upturned to him, one hand holding her cloak about her bare shoulders. I heard her laugh, sharp and clear like that of a child, ringing out through the night. She crossed the pavement to the steps, stopped to speak to him again and then turned away into the house. The man walked rapidly up the street; the carriage rolled off; and presently a light appeared above in the windows of my wife's room.

Filled suddenly with violent and angry thoughts, I almost ran toward the house. My hand trembled with a sort of rage as I laid it upon the door. All the comfortable certainty of a little while past had been swept away. I felt belittled, cheated, made sport of. Whether my wife or Amelia had deceived me; whether they had no thought of meeting Richter, or had expected to see him there; whether Amelia had repented of her promise to Harmon, and with Bettina's connivance was once more engulfed in her old infatuation, were all questions which surged blackly in my mind. And for the first time I experienced that feeling of savage helplessness a man has when he combats the ingenuity, the malice and the secretiveness of women.

Going directly to the library, I sent one of the servants to ask my wife if she could come to me. I walked impatiently up and down, but I had hardly waited a few moments when I heard Bettina descending the stairs. She came into the room, closing the door behind her. She still wore her cloak as she had come from the Opera, and her long gloves hung limply from her hand. In her hair and on her breast were diamonds, and fastened against the dull satin of her gown a great sheaf of purple orchids. I had a strange feeling as I looked at her that here was a woman whom I did not know, and of whose personality I had neither intuition nor perception. A distance, more immense and more solid than any I had ever felt, seemed completely to separate us.

She laid her hand lightly upon the back of a chair. "You sent for me, Bremer?"

"Yes," I answered, "I did. I have just come home. I saw Amelia and yourself talking to that man—to Richter—before you entered the house. How did it happen? Did you expect to see him there?"

She smiled slightly. "No."

There is nothing more maddening than a woman who will not volunteer any information, who shuts her mind up, padlocks it and stands smiling at you. There she is, slight, graceful, erect; she has a thousand secrets in her heart of which you know nothing; even at that moment she may be setting the match to the flimsy structure of your happiness; she knows, but you do not; she smiles, and age-old contempt looks at you out of her pale, clear eyes.

"You mean then," I persisted, "that you are certain Amelia had no appointment to meet him there?"

"You might ask her," she replied coldly. "I am certain she did not. Why should she meet him before me? One does not make a rendezvous with a lover in that fashion."

"He came upon you unexpectedly, then?"

"Oh, quite!"

"But you spoke to him—was that necessary?"

"I told him that his pursuit was useless, that she had changed her mind. Would you have had us make a scene before the servants? It passed off easily. They might have taken him for a friend. I do not think he expected to see us; he was merely walking past."

I came nearer to her, and stood before her, trying to look into her eyes.

"Bettina," I begged, "I can count upon you in this, can I not? It is a question which has nothing to do with whatever feeling you may have toward me, or I toward you. It is a trust which I must perform. I must look after this girl. You promised me—"

"I promised you she should not see him if I could prevent it. Well, she shall not. An accidental meeting cannot be helped. Besides, you cannot prevent her, in the end, from doing as she likes."

"She is to marry Wilfred."

"So she has told me."

"Are you glad?"

She drew one of her gloves slowly across the chair. "It is nothing to me. It suits you, no doubt."

"Bettina," I said, "you and I can hold together I suppose until Amelia is married. For her sake we shall have to maintain some sort of outward show of unity. After that—"

Turning quickly, she looked at me. "Well, after that?"

"You are not happy; perhaps you would be happier—"

She was moving toward the door; baffled at the white, set look on her face, I caught her by the arm. "Come back," I said hoarsely. "Sit down. For God's sake, let us talk this out for once!"

Slowly she freed her arm. She stood perfectly still, looking at me. Heaven knows what was in her eyes—contempt, knowledge, power, a blending of many things I had never seen there before; if I had but known it, the look with which a woman seals the death of love.

"There is nothing to talk out between you and me," she said slowly.

Her fingers were on the handle of the door; she opened it and passed out.

IV

"You understand nothing," Amelia had said to me, "nothing!" Was it true? Looking back, it seems to me that I had no chance to understand.

I seemed to feel, to have an intuition, that Richter was at times at the house; that Amelia found means to meet him. But there was no way of my ascertaining to a certainty unless I questioned the servants; and that I could not bring myself to do.

Indeed, Amelia would have found few difficulties in meeting Richter. His new book on Socialism, "God and the Man," had readers in every circle of life. His natural gifts, with which he was but too richly endowed, his spontaneity, his easy, careless agreeableness, the strong emotionalism which underlay his character, and which shone from his blue Teutonic eyes and seemed always ready to burst forth into flame, drew women easily to him. It became the fashion of the hour to drive or motor to "Thornledge," the place, half bungalow, half country house, he had built on the Hudson. The house stood high above the river in a lonely, deserted region; surrounded by a small park of its own, it was cut off as completely as possible from all communication with its few neighbors. Thither gay parties of young people came for tea in the afternoon, to sit around the blazing fire, to talk, to laugh, to play, without any other restraint than that afforded by the presence of a young woman, perhaps three months married—or, muffled in furs, singing and shouting, the girls' satin feet descending on the snow-covered porch, they arrived after dark to dine, to dance, to play bridge, to be whirled back swiftly between one day and the next over the white, frozen roads, beneath the brilliant light of a winter moon.

Richter, who affected to despise society, had a very fair showing of the elect about his own table. In a word, he had become the center of the season's fickle interest, a man impossible to avoid, sought after for the spice of his apparent indifference. Strangely enough, his ubiquity had the effect of calming my fears.

As he advanced in social influence, he faded from my mind as a factor of personal harm.

Perhaps the fact that Amelia's engagement to Harmon had been announced lulled my faculties into a somnolent atmosphere of safety. It seems to me now that every perception I had must have been dulled at that time, and perhaps not without cause. I watched my own life breaking up about me, and I seemed to have neither the will nor the power to stay its gradual destruction. I saw less and less of Bettina. I began to be very infrequently at home. It is possible that if I had looked into my own heart at that time, and tried to comprehend the dull pain writhing there, things might have been different. But I did not try. I knew only that the white face of my wife, seen always dimly through a sort of mist, filled me with unbearable pain, from which I was glad to flee. Whether it looked at me reproachfully or coldly, I knew not. I knew only that we were parted, that I seemed to be in a state of frozen apathy, incapable of making any sign, incapable of the slightest effort to stay the widening gulf between us.

And she did nothing. If she suffered, rejoiced or accepted, she gave no indication. She sat always with her pale, still face turned from me and her chill voice robbed of all inflection. She passed me on the stairs with a slight gesture of the head, going always outward, away from that house which no longer had anything to hold her. At my own table I met her perhaps twice a week.

Silence! Silence! Silence! That house, which had once been a home, was now dead, inert.

There comes a time, I believe, in the course of every affection when doubts rise and obscure the mind, when the heart questions its own purpose. That time had come to me. I no longer knew whether I loved my wife.

My evenings were spent mainly at the club. I became a fixture there, followed, I suppose, by the smiles of those who know everything—and nothing. One evening I sat as usual, withdrawn into a corner, thoroughly wretched, not

wishing to speak to anyone, and pretending to read. In reality my thoughts had been wandering aimlessly and painfully about Bettina, about Amelia, about myself. Snatches of the conversation around me drifted into my moody consciousness. Sometimes I listened to it idly; sometimes I lost it altogether. Groups broke up, newcomers attached themselves to old ones, the tide of men continually shifted and changed in the room, and yet, in the main, the words, like moths, seemed always to flutter about the lurid light of one subject, the latest and most blatant scandal of our narrow world. A man—it does no harm to say his name now—a man named Bennderby, whom I knew rather well, one of the most popular, amiable and likable of fellows, had suddenly discovered that his wife, to whom he had been married but a few years, and with whom he was passionately in love, had been for some time untrue to him. He had shot both the man and her, and had gone—heaven knew whither! The advisability of this course, the moral aspect of Bennderby's revenge, the likelihood of his being punished therefor, were incessantly discussed all around me. I became nauseated with the subject. That such things should be dragged out into the common light of day, picked at and pawed over by the curious seemed to me unutterably loathsome. I was at last actually hunted out by the thing, and left the club more disgusted with my fellow men than I had been for some time. It was yet early, hardly eleven o'clock. I had little inclination to go directly home at that time, knowing that I should lie awake for hours. Insomnia, that curse of the unhappy, had claimed me.

I walked slowly up Broadway, seeking distraction in the lights, the crowds, the noise. Yet, do what I would, I could not get poor Bennderby out of my thoughts. I looked into all the faces passing by me, some gay, some careless, some buoyant, some sad, some old and worn—that continual wavelike crowd surging out into the night, bent upon joy or destruction—and among them all I saw the face of Jim Bennderby, young, strong and eager, with the rev-

erential look in his gray eyes, as he had spoken to me one night of his wife. His wife! She was dead now. Pretty Mrs. Jim, who had never seemed to have brains enough to deceive anyone! I saw her looking at me from the dark, with her cherubic, blond face and her wide eyes, apparently as harmless as a kitten. And she was dead! And poor Bennderby, who had loved her, it seemed that he had made rather a mess of things.

Then suddenly, like a flash from the sky, the thought struck home: if it had been I, if it had been Bettina? But it was neither I nor Bettina, thank God! I had no such horror to contend with. Whatever the unhappiness of our married life, there was in it nothing irretrievable, nothing irrevocable. We had kept the letter of the law; we had abided by those vows of two years ago, so passionately interchanged, so seemingly eternal. Whatever disappointments, whatever fallacies my marriage had shown me, my heart had turned toward no other woman, and I believed that hers held no image but mine. If the years had not drawn us closer together, had not woven the web even tighter and tighter with the cords of affection, they had raised up no specter between us; they concealed no hidden and abominable shame. There was nothing irretrievable! I think, for the first time since I stood that night behind the closed door of her room, a faint hope began to stir in my heart. I had never before given any thought to my wife's fidelity. I had not looked upon it as anything to be thought of. It seemed as natural a thing to me as the sun shining in the heavens, and as little likely to be withdrawn. But in the light of the last hour it clothed her with a sweet dignity, which she had never worn before.

"Not irretrievable!" I said the words over to myself as I went up the steps into the house. For many months I had not neared my home with such lightness of heart. I had, more times than I could tell, paused at the door, hesitating to enter, ready to turn back to the distractions of the crowded streets. But now I crossed the thresh-

old with relief. I asked one of the servants if Mrs. McLean had come in. He said that she had not been out. An odd sense of satisfaction warmed my heart. As the elevator shot upward, I felt that I was glad of her presence in those darkened rooms above me. I stepped out into the upper hall, turned the handle of the study door and opened it. Of late it had become my habit to read there far into the morning. One lamp upon the desk was burning low, and the room seemed empty. Then, as I stepped within, I saw her there, as I had seen her so often in the short years of our married life, curled in the depths of a chair before the fire. She seemed to love the heat like a kitten, to be like some small, furry, innocent animal that cuddles to one for warmth and protection.

As I came into the room she turned suddenly, and even in that light I saw that her face was curiously flushed, vivid and expectant.

"You come upon me like a ghost!" she said.

I do not know why, but it seemed to me that I felt a presence in the room, as of someone who had been there and had gone. I looked all about me, but everything was as it always had been.

"I am sorry that I frightened you," I answered. "I did not know that you were here."

"I have been sitting here a little while," she said in a low voice, and she got up as though to leave me.

"Don't go," I begged. "I want to talk to you."

She looked at me with surprise and hesitation. It seemed to me for a moment that she was frightened of me in some peculiar way. Then she sank down in her chair again.

"Did I call you from your dreams?" I asked, as I bent over the lamp with my cigarette.

"No," she said. "No."

"You were sitting here so silently."

As I turned the flame up she spoke to me quickly: "Let it be. I do not want any more light."

I turned it down again, and repeated:

"You were so still I thought there was no one here."

She moved restlessly. "I was looking at the fire."

"Pictures?" I said. "Then don't destroy them!" For she had leaned forward and stirred the wood quickly, so that a whirlwind of sparks went roaring up the chimney. In the momentary gush of light, I saw her eyes, brooding, deep, as though they looked far away into a land of their own.

"You could not have seen them," she answered. "You would not have wished to see them. I detest this time of night! How still the house is!"

"Where is Amelia?"

"She has gone out—to the Lombards."

"And you?"

"I have been here this evening. I was—I stayed at home."

"Bettina," said I, "have you heard about poor Bennderby?"

"Bennderby?" she queried, as though her thoughts came back from a long distance. "Bennderby? No; what about him?"

"He has killed his wife."

She shrank from me with horror. "He—killed her!"

"Yes. She and Folkstone—you know. It had been going on for a long time. He found it out at last. He was insane, I suppose. He shot them both. Terrible is it not?"

She was still for a long time. Finally she said in a low voice: "He loved her."

"Jim?" I said. "He adored her, poor fellow."

"He loved her," she repeated with strange insistence. "That silly, babbling idiot, with only a pretty face!"

"Bettina," I went on, as I walked back and forth behind her chair, "I don't know why I spoke to you of this, except that, as I was walking home tonight, I thought to myself that unless something was irretrievable, irrevocable as this thing was, that matters might somehow be—patched up. I did not mean to speak to you tonight, but I found you here."

"What do you mean?" she asked. "Do you mean that—you and I—"

"Perhaps."

"And you mean—" She seemed to feel her way as someone does in the dark.

"That there has been, thank God, nothing of that sort between us."

"Nothing of that sort," she repeated slowly and carefully, as though she took each word up and let it fall again; but they seemed to convey nothing to her mind. There was such passionate dejection in her manner that I looked at her in amazement.

"I wish to heaven, Bremer," she cried suddenly, "that there *had* ever been anything between us, good or bad, that would have shown us to each other for what we are!"

"My dear," I answered, and she seemed to wince at the word, "two years should have shown us to each other."

"Two years!" she exclaimed. She got up suddenly, turning on me. "And you think it can be—patched up!"

There was a hidden excitement in her look, which even I saw and felt then, though I was unable to divine the cause.

"I may have chosen my words ill," I replied. "I meant perhaps—we might try again. We might—don't you think—do anything to avoid—"

"A public scandal!" she broke in.

"Not wholly that."

"And you think that I—that I—" The words choked in her throat.

"I think you might take the tide at the flood," I said in a low voice, "and turn back."

She laughed nervously. "You speak as a man always does—too late."

I walked up and down again. "I am no chooser of psychological moments. I dare say I should not know one if I saw it. I only say to you, Bettina, that I am willing to take things up again as they were; and, if we can—"

Again she interrupted me, and looking up, I saw her eyes fixed on me, filled with an expression which I could not understand. "As they were?" she asked.

"That was what I said. To take things up as they were."

She continued to look at me, as

though perhaps she tried to connect me with some phantom of the past. "Things will never be as they were."

"I only meant—"

"Don't you know," she said, "that life is always a going forward? Are you so dull, Bremer, that you do not understand that there is never any going back?"

She was near me now, and I looked down at her, startled at a depth in her tones which I had never heard before. She spoke seriously, unaffectedly, and without that sexual appeal which had before been inseparable from her every gesture.

"I meant perhaps a beginning again," I replied, trying to speak as lightly as I could, and fearful of the old rush of tears and petulance. But it seemed that I had no need to fear the tears that had once come so easily to her eyes; they were dry, and the white face looked parched with the scorch of emotions that had come and gone. As she drew close to me her glance seemed to envelop me. She stood so, looking at me, while in the silence I heard the clock ticking away the heavy moments.

"Bremer," she said, "answer me. For I want the truth now—nothing but that, you understand. Answer me. Do you love me with your whole heart and soul?"

Oh, the eternal question of woman!

I caught her hand in mine. "Why do you ask me now?" I cried. "Why could you not wait? Perhaps, not as you ask—not now. But some day—Bettina!"

My voice trailed off into the dead stillness of the room; and I saw a shade steal over her face so fine, so intangible, that it seemed to me no more than a film of gossamer; yet it veiled from me as by an impenetrable night the workings of her mind. She withdrew her hand from mine, turning composedly away.

"Well, one should know better than to be tragic!" And she added, making a motion with her hand as though she threw something light into the air: "So much for that!"

- And it occurred to me suddenly that

there was something terrible in this, in the composure of this woman, who had once been a child in tears and jealousies and waywardness.

I saw her walking toward the door, and I called after her quickly: "Nina! Nina!"

She paused, looked back, and it seemed to me that I saw something expectant in her face and figure.

Words! Words! Words! When will we learn that they mean nothing to these creatures of the emotions, so delicately fashioned, so strangely adjusted; that a touch of the hand, a caress, an endearment, speak to them when our words die idly on our lips!

I did not move, but it seemed to me that I put my soul into my petition: "You will think it over will you not?"

The light, so nearly imperceptible, faded from her face. "I will think it over," she answered quietly, as she opened the door and passed out.

I listened until the sound of her footsteps on the stairs merged into the thick silence of the night. Then I made one of those motions with which we endeavor to deny and to ward off a fear of the future. I drew my chair to the table and opened the book which had kept me company for many nights. But I did not look at it. I sat still.

After a time, I know not how long, I rose, and crossing the room, lifted a corner of the blind. It had grown very late; in the long expanse of street I saw only one creature, moving very swiftly with his head bent to the wind. I followed him with my eyes; presently he turned a corner and vanished. The cold, loneliness, silence, had possession of the night.

Only a dull roar, the groan of the city in slumber, hung above it like a vast cloud. But there were beings, infinitesimal in all that immensity of brick and stone, who did not sleep. Across the dark belt of the Park, here and there, were the twinkling gleams of far-off windows. I looked at them, wondering what grief, what evil kept those awake who, like me, sought to pass the hours of the night, waiting until morning.

V

As I entered the house late one afternoon and shook the misty, soggy rain from my coat, I saw the yellow envelope of a telegram lying on the hall table. I tore it open. In reality I had no need to look at it, for I knew what it contained. Honoria was dying. For five, for eight years I had expected to find that message awaiting me some evening when I returned home. Yet, now that I held it in my fingers, I was stunned. I looked at it and could not comprehend.

It has come. I should like to see you if convenient.

H. McL.

What had come, then? Death. That friend whom she had looked for impatiently, yet smilingly, had at last crossed the threshold of my sister's house. And as she had awaited him for fifteen years of her life, so she probably received him now, calmly and with infinite decorum.

A lingering and fatal disease had made miserable the lives of many of the women of my family. It had not spared Honoria. At the last she was being thrust out of life, as my mother had been before her. Fate, which had played with her year after year, as a cat plays with a mouse, had tired of the game and meant now to make an end.

As I stood with the paper in my hand, the door behind me opened and Bettina came in. I caught the look, half startled, half displeased, which slipped from beneath her lids as I turned toward her.

"Come to the library with me," I said.

I made a motion with the telegram, and we crossed the hall side by side. In the long, lamp-lit room Bettina walked over to the fire; she slipped the furs a little from her throat while she turned to me a look coldly apprehensive. I spoke in a low tone and without preface:

"Honoria is dying."

Her face, which had turned very white, quivered with a spasm of pain.

"Honoria — dying!" she breathed. She stood staring at me, while a sort of liquid film passed over her eyes.

"For many years," I went on, "as perhaps you know, she has lived merely on the worn edge of life—a miserable existence! At last the end has come. I must go up to Cooperville at once. Can you be ready to go with me in—say, fifteen minutes?" I looked at the clock. "There is a train at six thirty-five. It is seven minutes to six now."

Suddenly she regained her composure. "I can go now—as I am," she answered. "A few things in my bag—Aurelie can do it in five minutes."

She was hastening from the room. "And Amelia?" I asked.

"She is out of town—at the Morses' over Sunday. Telephone her. She can take the first train tomorrow."

In a quarter of an hour Bettina and I were being borne swiftly toward the Grand Central Station.

The simple act of dismissing our motor, of purchasing our tickets, of touching Bettina's arm as I assisted her onto the train confused me with a sort of miserable happiness. Something familiar and poignantly moving laid its hand upon my heart. I reflected with terror upon the three hours of our journey, the three hours when we should sit face to face and without any distractions. And I felt myself yielding to an intolerable pressure. Like a man who suffers in looking upon something heartrendingly pathetic, I realized only that this journey was the repetition of our wedding journey.

Over this same way we had passed on the afternoon of our marriage, conveyed toward this same isolated farm, which for a week before our departure to Europe was to shelter the joy of our new love. Was Bettina thinking of this as she sat looking out through the mist at the swiftly passing fields? Did she see, instead of these gray rocks, these bent and writhing trees, this wash of rain, a smiling, tender country, wrapped in infantile, soft veils of green, rosy under the last kisses of the sun, sweet with the exquisite sweetness of spring? Did she see, in place of the man who sat opposite her, moody, his hair slightly streaked with gray, a younger man, erect and graceful, with fire in his glance?

Two years had passed, two years of disillusion, of heartbreak, of regret.

We were not now what we had been then. Months, weeks, days had exhausted and impoverished us. Marriage, that terrifying speculation, had turned out badly for us. We shared in its failure. As in my attitude, so in her whole person, certain changes, the outward results of that failure, were visible. Her face had hardened, her lips grown firm. Fine threadlike lines ran beneath her eyes and from the corners of her nose. Her cheeks were flattened, the edges of her mouth were a little worn. At twenty she was no longer a young girl. She was a woman who was losing her first beauty, a woman who was a little faded, a little impaired. I perceived it with a shock for the first time. I had before me very distinctly the vision of the newly wedded wife, the young girl who had sat opposite me two years ago.

Incompatibility! I had often heard that phrase, and in the lines of the divorce columns I had looked at it, marveling on what slight grounds some of my fellow creatures broke the awful compact of marriage. Brutality, infidelity, desertion—these were great words. Some such reason as these one might understand. But now, within my own life, I saw the workings of that force so much more powerful than any one of these, so insidious, so relentless, so formidable, that supreme incitement and energy of division which it is impossible to combat. With every material advantage, two years had but brought us to this—that we looked despairingly for a way out of the indissoluble covenant.

Almost an hour had elapsed since we had boarded the train. We sat opposite each other in attitudes of forced composure. By various subterfuges we endeavored not to exchange glances whenever we looked about us. Those glances would have unveiled our thoughts, which we were resolved to hide from one another. The porter had changed into his white linen coat. He had set up the little table between us. We dined. Embarrassed by that narrow strip of wood which served to join us, we

spoke spasmodically and confusedly, afraid that the other passengers would notice something odd in our relations.

"What time is it?"

"Twenty-five minutes past seven."

"When do we get in?"

"A little after nine."

"How it rains!"

"A horrible night!"

Our hands met among the coarse dishes and the array of nickel knives and forks. We were afraid of that involuntary touch which reminded us of everything we were determined to forget. It was strange and discomposing to sit so near to one another. We managed to convey the food to our lips without looking up from the tablecloth, and to speak without seeming to address each other.

The train was rushing now through an abyss of blackness; drops of water continually trickled down the windows; every now and then the whistle sounded with that eerie, peculiar note it gives forth in desolate country. The car swung from side to side; the cold of bleak, rarefied air began to penetrate it. It gathered speed, hurling itself onward into the night.

Our bodies swayed with the velocity of that flight through the storm and darkness. The food which we tasted sickened and choked us. Our nearness was intolerable. I made a sign to the waiter, and the cloth was removed, the table taken away. We were thankful that we no longer had to sit with knees almost touching. The few passengers in the Pullman turned from the glistening windows, looked idly up and down, and sank lower in their chairs. They were not interested in us; they perceived in us nothing unusual. They were bored and impatient. I gazed at Bettina; her face was a pale yellow under the glare of the lighted car; she turned her head wearily from side to side.

"Shall we have to stay there long?"

"Probably not."

"Why didn't you tell me that Honoria was ill?"

"What was the use? She has been ill fifteen years."

"Is that why she never married?"

"I don't know. I suppose so."

She closed her eyes; her body composed itself into a semblance of slumber.

Suddenly my sister's life seemed to rise before me; outwardly so calm, so well ordered, what had it concealed?

For many years she had lived, hidden in this small town in Connecticut, on a farm which my father had bought to satisfy his occasional humor for solitude, and where we had spent perhaps a month each autumn. Five years ago she had embraced Catholicism. Was that because of Maurice de Croissy? De Croissy was an attaché at the French Embassy. Once my sister had said: "I have refused to marry De Croissy; that is all God can ask of me." What had she meant by that?

People smiled. "Oh, that affair! It has gone on so long it has an air of virtue."

She had said, too: "One has a right to some things, but not to others." Had she avenged herself upon that God who had tortured and defrauded her? She had become, at any rate, a harsh and bigoted *religieuse*. De Croissy had remained many years at Washington in the same position, surely not because of his inability to rise higher. For the past two years I had seen very little of Honoria; and I was moved now by a sense of poignant regret. It was too late for any kindnesses I might have shown. But Honoria had not been one to welcome kindness. She had disapproved absolutely of my marriage, and a certain coldness had arisen between us.

I remember our descending from the train, the clear, tingling air which struck our faces, the quiet, thickly falling snow, the tall and somber pines bending their branches under hoods of white. A wind rushed past us, fresh with the wide spaces of forests and of hills.

We seemed left there like two waifs in that immense blanched stillness. Beside me Bettina stood shivering on the platform.

A single carriage waited on the other side of the station. It was the shabby country wagon, with a closed top, which

had been my sister's only vehicle for years. The driver took our bags without greeting. He held the door open, looking down at his feet, and we entered the carriage. Between the barren branches of the trees I watched the lighted windows of the house long before we reached it.

VI

WHATEVER picture I had had in my mind of Honoria lying white on a bed, propped up by the attentive hands of nurses and surrounded by all the unpleasant appurtenances of the sickroom—shaded lights, muffled telephone, damp, sweet odors—was dispelled by my first vision of her, a vision strangely vivid, strangely alive.

To this day, the recollection of her excites in me the feeling of awe, of chilly fear, of defiance, and yet of that strong sense of kinship—kinship of blood and of soul—and of that stronger affection, which I felt for her, all in one flood, as when on that December evening I opened the door of her chamber.

She was alone. The dancing shadows of the firelight wavered upon wall and ceiling. On the table at her hand was a reading lamp, whose crimson shade glowed like a gigantic, full-blown poppy. My sister sat in her chair, and never have I known a person of such complete repose, nay, rather immobility. She had the look, not of one awaiting death, dissolution, but of arrested, quiescent vitality of intense, brooding force. The chair in which she sat had itself something of austere audaciousness; vast and heavy, with a high spreading back and carven arms, it was upholstered in red velvet, and against this crimson background the figure of my sister was revealed with startling distinctness. She was a large woman, deep-chested, broad-shouldered, tall and terribly emaciated. She gave one no impression of age, neither that she had ever been young nor that she would ever be old; she had something of the eternity of a mummy. There she sat, motionless, despotic, clothed in a long

garment of some soft white stuff, which was trimmed with bands of dead black velvet, a garment which seemed to me like the habiliment of the grave into which she was about to descend. All that one could see of her, her face and hands, were as deathly white as her robe, as white as whitest paper; thin, shrunken, almost transparent, the polished skin stretched tight over the strong, harsh lines of her visage.

Disease had separated her from ordinary mortals, as the prison engulfs others; she gave forth that livid and hectic glow which one perceives on the faces of those who live on the borders of solitude and the unknown.

I stood with my hand on the door, Bettina by my side. As she turned those brilliant eyes upon us, her lips parted in a sort of twisted grimace. She smiled.

"So you have brought your wife, Bremer!" And without waiting for me to reply, she turned her glance upon Bettina. "It was not necessary for you to come. You are young and good-looking. Your lover will not wish to see in your eyes the knowledge of death."

Bettina stood transfixed. She trembled; I felt the shaking of her arm against my own, and an expression of intense hostility gathered in her eyes. Hatred had long rankled in her against Honoria; it was combined now with that shuddering distaste which youth always feels in the presence of illness and death.

Honoria continued to regard Bettina: "You needn't kiss me. I have never approved of these family embracings. Sit down."

There was a sofa on the other side of the fire, and Bettina sank upon it. She sat bent a little forward, her head turned aside, her hands clasped. Her eyes were wide open. She was afraid—afraid of the night, of the silence, of the storm, of what was going on in that house.

VII

"WHY did you bring that woman?"
"Woman!"
"You know what I mean."

I looked steadily at my sister. "No, I don't."

"Perhaps not. You were always a little thickheaded."

"If you mean my wife—"

"So you acknowledge the relationship?"

"Acknowledge! What can that have to do with it?"

"Much. You find it necessary to acknowledge it to me! Pht!" as I made an angry motion with my hand. "Do you think you can stop my talking? I shall say what I please. I have the advantage of you, since you feel you are obliged to listen to me. When you were about to be married, I raised the usual ineffectual protest. You did not heed me. You consummated a marriage bound to fail. It has failed. And you stand viewing the *débâcle* of your house of cards. Well, what are you going to do?"

"Do?"

"Yes, do. What?"

The dull, thick cloud of obstinacy that always descended upon me at any mention of my wife by my family now began to obscure all my other sensations.

"I don't acknowledge your right to question me."

"For that I don't care a rap, my dear Bremer. Do you think I got you up here to hold my hand, to weep over me and to talk sentiment? What good would that do either you or me? There are one or two things I must say to you—" She stopped suddenly; her hand went to her breast; the worn body contracted itself in a frightful access of pain. From under the bluish lids two tears, terrible and pathetic, rolled over the pallid cheeks.

"Leave me alone. I want nothing. Yes, you can give me that hypodermic. There, on the mantel. The last dose has worn off. This is unfortunate. Come, look out of the window."

When I turned, she had concealed the syringe. The morphine was already penetrating her body. She sat erect in her chair. This woman had still a good fight left in her.

I knew not with what expression I

regarded her, but she divined my thought.

"Why not?" she said with that slow, infrequent smile. "One gives chloroform to animals. It would have been better if it had been given to me years ago. But I had something to say to you. Let me go on. When your house has been burnt over your head, you must need build another. Some people content themselves with hired lodgings. But not you. Well, what is left? Have you any love for your wife?"

"Do I love Bettina?" I repeated. "God knows! I *once* loved her."

I sat down and buried my face in my hands.

"My dear Bremer, you never loved her, have never yet loved her. You had a passion for her. You let that passion be your excuse for marrying her money."

"No! No!"

"But it is the truth from which it is so easy to turn one's eyes. You desired her—a young girl. The thought that she was rich dazzled you. The immensity of it! And the facility with which it could be made your own!"

I felt that I combated something. "I did not marry her for money. She attracted me. Think it if you will, I had no such baseness in me."

"But"—and the words had a chill finality—"you would not have married her without it. In that you did her the first tremendous wrong. Love you had not for her, since love forgives imperfections, has infinite patience in the endurance of them, even adapts them to his own uses."

I looked about me. "Yet it was you," I said, "you, who in this room, over two years ago, so mercilessly dissected that young girl, so laid open to my eyes each pitiful fault."

"Before your marriage, yes. But it was you who brushed them all aside, accepted them as you accepted her."

"Well, I've given up the struggle. I tell you life seems beaten out of me lately. Damnation! I don't care sometimes what happens next."

"And she?"

"How do I know? We exchange perhaps five set speeches a week."

She turned upon me that piercing and peculiar glance. "You should know. It is your business. Ask, fight, weep—anything to break the impassivity of that face!"

"She chooses to ignore my existence."

"Because she is young and a fool. Because she has not learned yet that every woman is a charwoman, and must go down on her knees to earn her pitance of affection."

"Why do you take her part? Haven't you always disliked her?"

"What difference does that make? I am ceasing to be a player in this comedy. I have seen only three acts; but you will play out the five. For the last month I have sat in this room, looking only at familiar things, seeing change only in the spot of sunlight moving from wall to ceiling. And I pass on to you the thoughts I have had. Pick up the pieces of your life and put them together. Nothing in this world is worth the losing of a human soul that has been near to one. If Bettina cannot live the life you wish her to, live with her whatever life she can.

"You have had no child. Well, I am sure I do not know why not. Open your heart a little and let her look into it. Don't cover up everything with that manner of yours. Force her to have a child. Give her a brat whose nose she can wipe, whose little fists will pommel her, whose small, pink body she can bathe and pin up in ridiculous flannel bands, who will yell and laugh and kick. Provide her with an occupation. And begin to live!"

I was silent. My marriage! Suddenly, and for the first time, I saw it as a picture before me—as something consecrated, mysterious, not as a mere social form and convention. I saw the white and gold of the altar cloths, the many candles, the profusion of flowers, the great church filled and silent. I heard the triumphant song of the choir, I saw the old bishop standing between the attendant priests, and I saw Bettina, in her white marriage robes, advancing toward me, her small, pale face

slightly lifted, her large eyes fixed, not on me, but on the figure of the Christ above her. And so they had married us. Only death, they had said, could part us; but how much better for her and for me if we had never stood there together! Yet I had meant honestly, and she, too, no doubt. It was destiny which had been adverse.

I stood immovable, petrified. At that moment, there was a slight noise, a gentle tapping upon the door, which opened immediately. Amelia stood there, in her long traveling coat, the snow still glistening on her hair. Honoria stretched her arms toward her, and with a sob the girl ran to her, knelt beside her and hid her face against that spare, cold breast. But the older woman bent her glance upon me. Her hawklike nose, her thin lips, her emaciated, terrible face concentrated itself again in the immobility of a mummy. She turned toward me once more, and forever, that mask which she had worn for fifteen years. I understood her. I left her.

VIII

MECHANICALLY I walked to the end of the hall to the room I had always occupied every autumn as a boy, and where Bettina and I had passed the first night of our wedded life. I opened the door. Against the darkness within I saw two pale squares of the windows and the dim outlines of familiar furniture. I put out my hand, groping for the bracket on the wall, where I knew the matches were kept. Then, before one of those whitish squares, I saw rising from its kneeling posture a form indistinct and vigilant. Immediately I lit the gas.

My wife stood before me. Her white wrapper clung about her in plain, straight folds; her dark hair, in two braids, fell over her shoulders, and between its severe ripples her face showed pure, childlike. I had never before seen her in such simplicity of attire. Its austerity invited nothing, expected nothing. It revealed her cold, chaste. We stood looking at one another.

"Forgive me," I said. "I did not know that you were here."

I felt myself rooted to the spot by some sort of frightful embarrassment. But she was unmoved; her voice had a chill steadiness.

"Everything is upset. No one told me where to go. It seemed natural to come here."

"And should be," I said slowly. I closed the door.

Her eyes dilated suddenly with fear. "What do you want?"

"Do you mind my staying here a few minutes?"

"No."

"Then please sit down."

"I had rather stand."

She stood, then, with her hands clasped and her long robe falling about her.

"But I can't talk to you if you stand up," I said. "Besides, you'll catch cold before that open window."

I crossed the room as I spoke and pushed down the sash. As I stood there, I looked out through the driving mist of snow, searching for the kindly light of some other habitation. But there was not one. The village slept. It was almost midnight. Only the wind howled; the storm whirled in great, glistening spirals; the house rocked and groaned.

My wife seated herself at the old-fashioned dressing table. She had lighted the candles on both sides, and as she sat there she began to unplat the long braids of her hair. She spoke without turning her head.

"What is it that you wish to say to me?"

I did not know. I stood there, looking at her in silence.

If I could have slipped down to her feet, laid my head on her knees and clasped her to me for comfort! But we were too far apart for that. That period of our life had gone like smoke.

"I do not know," I said at last, "what it was that I wished to say to you."

"You had nothing to say to me?"

"No."

"Then will you leave me?"

"You want me to go?" I whispered. The words were wrung from me, born of an intolerable anguish.

The gas died out; she stood before me in the little circle of light made by the candles on the dresser.

"I am going to bed," she answered in a cold voice.

Other words, hardly articulate, fell from my lips. "Haven't you any pity, any feeling for me?"

"In what way?"

"Great heaven! My sister is dying; I am alone. Not one of my family is left me. You say nothing! You stand there! You do nothing!"

"What do you wish me to do?"

"My God, you're not even human!"

I fancied I saw her sway a little. She put one hand to her breast. A peculiar sound, a cry that quivered on a laugh, struggled from her throat.

"But I thought you didn't like emotions?"

"Who's talking about *emotions*?"

Again that quivering laugh issued from her mouth, while with one hand she sought the edge of the dresser and clasped it.

"What's the matter with you? Are you mad?"

"Oh, no! But you expect me to be sorry because she's dying, do you? Well, I'm not! I'm not!"

"I know it. You've hated every member of my family. But that's not it. You don't care what I feel! God! Why should I stand here and explain?"

"You needn't. Don't ask what I can't give. I never had any place in your family. Even my money couldn't buy *that*!"

"You're mad to speak so. Even now—"

"You were discussing me with her—talking me over. How much better if it were I and not she—"

A frightful pain pierced my heart.

"No! No! Don't say that!"

She laughed again, a little spasm of joyless merriment. In the same moment there followed a loud hysterical cry; she slipped suddenly to her knees; her head fell against the chair. Then came the long, choking sobs, the quick gasping, the twisted, heaving body, the clenched hands of utter abandonment.

Terrified, I bent over her.

"Nina! What is it?"

"Don't touch me! Leave me! Let me be alone!"

"I'll call someone."

"No!"

"But I can't leave you so."

Something in her gave her strength. She struggled, rose to her feet, and faced me.

"Let me alone! I can't bear—bear any more. Go—go!"

In a vacant room, at the front of the house, a light was burning dimly. I stood there and looked all about me. I listened with terrible intentness for any sound from that room which I had just left. There was none. Loneliness is a sort of seizure upon one's soul. I felt the cold, the solitude, the night entering into my heart. I shivered with a horrible, alert nervousness.

I got into bed and pulled the clothes about me tightly. I lay shuddering, not from cold, but from desolation. I comprehended what a child feels when he is abandoned in the night. The firelight flickered about the room, and I watched the strange gigantic shadows on the ceiling. I thought of Amelia, who sat by my sister's bed, of the two poor old servants who slept, half dressed, downstairs, and of the doctor, who had answered in a weary, impatient voice, "No immediate danger." And against the darkness I saw my wife, with her arm raised, lowering the gas.

I closed my eyes and lay still, quite still. The fire had died down. It was perfectly dark.

I awoke and opened my eyes. I hardly comprehended where I was. I thought myself at home again, in my room. Gradually I took in my surroundings. So I was here, in my sister's house. I remembered everything. A pale, sickly gray was stealing through the drawn window shades; it was intensely cold, intensely still—a winter dawn. I sat up in bed. It seemed to me that I heard some sort of movement in the room, and I looked around.

Amelia stood in the doorway; she was still dressed; she held a candle in

her hand; and its light illuminated her tear-stained face.

"Come," she said.

"What's the matter?"

"Come."

I sprang up, wrapped my dressing gown around me and followed her. I looked up and saw De Croissy entering my sister's room. I saw his thin face turned away, his erect foreign carriage. I recognized him without surprise.

Distinctly on the silence, from the lips of the priest, fell the words of the Latin prayer:

"Pater noster qui es in caelis—"

I grasped Amelia's arm.

"Where is Bettina?" I asked.

She turned to me a face uncomprehending and sad. "She is not here," she said. "She is gone."

IX

It was on Wednesday morning that Honoria died. By noon we had word of Bettina. She was at home. As I remember it, I did not seem to have felt profound anxiety on her behalf. She had gone, as she did many things, without reason, swayed by her emotions, and acting on the impulse of the moment. Her morbid, hysterical fear and aversion of death had driven her forth, had taken her from me at perhaps the very moment when I most needed her. It was true, I said to myself, that she had never been, never would be a member of my family. Her nature seemed incapable of recognizing any tie of blood. Passion alone could appeal to her or hold her. In her own family she had been an alien. A pitiful, small figure, standing solitary in the world's light, surrounded by the glare of her wealth, she had been created surely to sorrow, to isolation. She was one of those anomalies, which this civilization brings forth; a being imperious and futile.

She had gone, then, while it was yet dark, in the early morning. She had clothed herself, and walked down, through that white, suffocating dawn, to the cheerless country station. I saw it all plainly—the low, wooden building,

the whirling storm, the sleeping ticket agent within, Bettina, huddled in her furs, waiting alone there for the train which came through at five o'clock. She had boarded it, she who had never traveled alone, and had gone back to New York, borne onward through the blizzard, sitting upright in one of those hard red-cushioned seats. The thought of her homecoming filled me with a bitter shame. How had she arrived there, at eight o'clock in the morning, alone, without a maid, without even a handbag, in a common cab? What whispering and talebearing had there been already among the servants? God forgive me, it was of these things I thought!

She, who hardly touched her foot to the pavement on a pleasant day, had walked two miles in a storm. And this incredible folly had brought on an attack of gripe. When finally I got into communication with the house, I was told that she slept, exhausted, in her bed. It seemed to me then that I saw her there, relaxed and lying on her side as she was accustomed to, her hand beneath the curve of her neck, her lips slightly parted, and a feeling of immense relief passed over me. I breathed freely.

The settlement of my sister's affairs kept me in Cooperville until the following Monday. I had the task of closing the house, of placing it in the hands of an agent.

Bettina I found at home, propped in her gilded bed among her lace pillows and the scented hangings of her room. Neither of us mentioned her leaving Cooperville, or even my sister's death. Twice every day I would look in on her. Our conversation consisted in inquiries on my part concerning the state of her health, and in short, weary replies upon hers. We were never alone. The trained nurse sat always in her chair by the window. In a fortnight Bettina seemed to be improving. The doctor advised her to go South. One afternoon she spoke of it.

"You don't mind? I want to go to some quiet place."

"The Worthleys have a cottage at Miami. I can get that for you."

"No! Not a cottage. I don't want that."

"In your own suite at the Poinciana you can be quiet enough."

"No. You don't understand what I mean. I want some quiet place—quite lonely—a farmhouse—no one else there."

"You cannot take servants to any such place."

"That's it. I don't want any. I want to be by myself."

"But you can't travel without your maid."

"Oh, yes, yes! Why not? With one trunk. You can find the place."

I saw that she was becoming feverish, and I appeared to give in. I consulted the doctor. He advised me to let her have her own way. So I spent a week in searching for the place. It was found at last, a farmhouse in South Carolina, kept by a responsible man and woman. I made all the necessary arrangements. Without her knowing it, I journeyed there and back. Then one morning about the middle of the month, I saw her off, a self-contained, soberly clad little figure. To the end she was obdurate; she would not take even a maid.

When she had left I had a strange feeling. It seemed as though she were gone from me for good.

But this sensation did not last. Days, which seemed to me days of peace, followed a hiatus in my life. At first I wrote to her twice a week, and each week she answered me in precise, regular, cold little notes. She spoke well of her own health, was assiduous in inquiries for mine, declared herself extremely comfortable. As for me, sometimes an unholy laughter would seize me at the thought of Bettina in that farmhouse bedroom, amid horribly ugly furniture, and surrounded by a wall paper covered with brilliant pink nasturtiums, that spongy pink which we see in the candy of childhood.

The days slipped one after another along their even grooves. Since it was our period of mourning, Amelia went out little; she spent the evenings with me in the library, seated reading where the light of the lamp fell on her blue

eyelids and her coppery hair. As the day of her marriage drew ever nearer she spoke almost affectionately of Wilfred; she seemed even about to welcome the approaching change in her life. Often we three, Amelia, Wilfred and I, would pass the evening together. He would sit patiently in a chair by her side, playing with the silver reels of her embroidery silk, watching for the infrequent smile on her lips. She allowed him few caresses, but she seemed increasingly to suffer his presence. If at times her air seemed too buoyant, her speech too animated, I put it down to the excitement which I had been led to believe naturally went with the business of a trousseau. I had heard no more of Richter. I had almost forgotten him.

But one evening, turning to me from her book, she said suddenly:

"I saw Franz Richter today on the train. He was evidently going South."

I paused a moment before I asked: "You spoke to him?"

"Oh, no! Merely bowed. I went to see Lucile James off. He was in the same Pullman."

For an instant the old fear, the old bitterness made itself felt. This man had left an ineffaceable impression upon her life; she could not meet him without recalling it; when he passed, an emotional embarrassment troubled her; she spoke his name as she would never speak any other.

I said at last: "Why do you speak of him?"

"What harm can it do?"

"It shows that you still think of him."

"Not always. At times."

"It would be better not at all."

"No doubt," she replied absently.

She let the book which she was holding slip to her knees.

"You think I am still in love with him," she said in a low voice. "You are mistaken."

"I would rather not think of it at all."

"One cannot put things aside like that. I want to talk to you."

I got up, leaning over the table that divided us to light a cigarette.

"But you can always do that."

"Not always, Hughie. I want to say to you that I don't regret my engagement to Wilfred. I shall even welcome my marriage."

"Of course, dear."

"Oh, no! Not of course. But I feel differently now."

"How, then?"

"I accept. That is what life comes to mean, isn't it? Acceptance—of the second best. Realization and acceptance."

"I wish it might mean more to you than that."

"Does it mean more than that to many of us? How many women do we know—you and I—who married 'for love'? Perhaps one in a hundred. They took what I take—only with a better grace."

"My dear, they'd grab at what you half decline."

"The dreadful money!"

I turned a page or two of my book. I dreaded anything that she might say to me. Sometimes my heart misgave me. Can any of us plan another's life? And I had done that for her—I and Honoria. I heard her speaking through a sort of mist.

"Oh, the best and the worst has gone by forever! One doesn't have that twice. And I had it. Perhaps some don't at all. One must think of that. There is something I wished to tell you—in a way, a confession. I used to meet Franz Richter in some rooms down on Ninth Street. They were rooms we used for conferences, and, at one time, as a dispensary. We kept supplies there—medicines and bandages and all those things. We both had keys, you see. In the afternoons there was no one there."

"Ah," I begged, "don't tell me any more! Why should you?"

"I never told you. I wish to. You thought there was no reality in my relationship with Richter. But there was. You imagined I had conceived a sort of mystical passion for him. You were wrong. There was no mysticism about it." She bowed her head. "He was my lover—you understand what I mean."

"No wrong, I'm sure!"

"No! No! But I loved him. So we used to meet there. We meant no harm. No one knew. Sometimes he was there; sometimes I had to wait a little for him, though never long—the silence and the dust seemed filled with the beating of my heart. The windows were always dirty. There were a few chairs and a table in each room. In the front room there was an old sofa. So we used to sit there, looking out through the grimy panes at the dull day and the darkening sky and the lights coming out in the mean houses opposite. And then to tear ourselves away—how hard it was! Those wretched rooms were paradise!"

"That was all. You know now. And it's over. You sent me away, and I don't regret it. I couldn't have married him. I know that. And when I saw him today I knew I didn't love him any more—that you were right; one can't trust him. But that's not his fault, either. Do you know that they say he is in poor health? Something the matter with his heart. It is said that he won't live long. It seems strange. But he always breathed heavily when coming upstairs."

"It's not that I regret him. I haven't any regrets, except for the possibilities that are dead in me—that he took, somehow, out of me."

She rose, came over to me and suddenly knelt beside me, taking my hand in both of hers.

"Ah, Bremer, you're more fortunate than I!"

"How so, my dear?"

"You don't know now. But you will know."

Her head fell against my knee.

"I loved him! I loved him!"

"My dear!"

She put her cheek against my hand and rose. Silently bending over her, I kissed her upon her forehead, a kiss pitying and paternal. She looked steadily at me and in a moment was gone.

I was left with leisure for reflection. Thoughts sullen and abhorrent marched through my brain. I had believed that, in the imprudence of her youth, Amelia

had merely turned illusive musings upon Richter—that he had been merely that convenient object upon which had settled the sickly sentimentality of a young girl. I had comprehended nothing. He had held her in his arms. As for me, I refused to face that picture. Why had she loved him? God alone knew! And if she had married him? But that was impossible. Her life was planned out now. She would follow it; and in the ultimate adjustment she would find happiness. And I realized suddenly that my personal definition of happiness had changed. What I had looked for at first in my own marriage, what I had been used to look for in others, I no longer expected—perhaps no longer even desired. What I meant was not happiness but peace. After all, she had known happiness, illusory, tinged with the promise of extinction as it always must be, there in those dark rooms on Ninth Street. It was gone—but she would hold the memory of it in her heart forever.

X

JANUARY had almost run its course, and Bettina had been away since the sixteenth of December. Our letters had grown less regular; on her part they had almost ceased entirely. A change was entering into my life, a new element and a danger. I recognized it indifferently. Almost every afternoon, and now and then in the evening, I walked down to Washington Square to spend two or three hours with Henrietta Morse. I hardly knew how I had fallen into the way of it. One day on the Avenue very soon after Bettina's departure Henrietta had beckoned to me from her carriage. She had taken me in among the four or five little white dogs she always had with her, and had driven me home with her "for tea." She assumed, and with certainty, that I would take up again regularly a habit which had long ago been dismissed.

In the old days I had known Henrietta well. She was a second cousin. Since my marriage I had seen little of her. She ignored now with an angelic

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blindness, the long break in our friendship. And she presented a soft cushion to all the sharp angles of my life. Indeed, I was growing rather dull and heavy. I was drinking steadily, a great deal more than was good for me. But Henrietta seemed not to notice it. She asked nothing of me, and she amused me. She played well, and she sang a little in a pleasant, modulated contralto. So I sat watching her one night as the yellow candlelight fell on her pale, polished hair, and her white hands running deftly over the keys.

*"La tombe dit à la rose:
—Des pleurs dont l'aube t'arrose
Que fais-tu, fleur des amours?
La rose dit à la tombe:
—Que fais-tu de ce qui tombe
Dans ton gouffre ouvert toujours?"*

The music floated through the heated room. She did not look at me. She seemed not even to notice me. Only the sweet, pacifying tones of her voice seemed to envelop and soothe me. I felt dully content. Everything about me in the room was old, and dark, and gently unobtrusive, arranged with that perfection of detail which conceals all thought. And it was insidiously comfortable, with the comfort of an old and shabby glove.

She was singing something else now, a sickly mournful song which had been "popular" in the days of our youth. I recognized it; yet the words seemed to have no meaning. My mind, extraordinarily large, extraordinarily opaque, took them up and played with them like balls.

"Oh, thy dear hand, so cruel and so hard—"

She rose and came over to me. One of her little dogs trotted beside her. A long gown of some thin, simple drapery fell about her; as she moved, the air caught and swayed its gossamerlike texture back and forth. Her feet made no sound. She was unobtrusive, like the room, quiet and benign. She sat down near me, leaning her elbows on a small table that stood between us. The broad, calm features of her face seemed warmed with some inward flame.

"Tired, poor old boy?" she asked.

"Tired to death!"

"And I, too."

"What have you to be tired about?"

In the vague, somnolent state in which I was it seemed to me a personal affront that I should be forced to give ear to ills other than my own.

"Everything."

"What's everything?"

"I've always let you think, you see, that it was all right, that I was happy. But it isn't! It isn't!"

"You know George. You know what he is. Just a drunken beast. I've lived with him three years now." She paused. "I ought to have married you."

"Umph!"

"Everyone thought we'd marry, you know."

"Did they?"

"Of course. We'd been brought up together. It seemed the natural thing, didn't it?"

"I suppose so."

"Yes. But there was no use, was there, in my making you miserable with the thought that you had let me marry him?"

"But, damn it, I don't see what I had to do with your marrying!"

"Don't you? But *you* might have married me. You almost did."

"I don't remember."

"But *I* do." She said it very low, and turned her face from me. "All those summers at Isleboro when we were young. You always meant to—only you didn't."

"Well, if I had, 'twouldn't have made things any better."

"Why not? We'd have been happy together. I would do anything to make you happy."

She stretched her beautiful arms out over the table, clasping the other side of it with her fingers. Her eyes held mine.

"But I wouldn't do anything to make trouble for you."

"What do you mean?"

"To make trouble between you and—your wife."

"Oh," I laughed. "Well, you can't make any trouble there."

"I know that."

"I've made a rotten mess out of my own life."

"Yes. So if we both could get a little happiness now, what would be the difference?"

She stooped and laid her hand on the head of the little dog.

"Difference? I don't know."

"Nor I."

She stood up. "Oh, it makes me sick to think of our lives, yours and mine!"

"Who cares what becomes of them?"

"We do, don't we?"

She knelt down beside me. "Do you remember that dance at the Atterburys' eight years ago at Isleboro? We wandered off down behind the house near the beach, you and I. Don't you remember? You could see the water between the trees, all silver, and the moon shining on it like a great, white, tired flower. It was almost as light as day. And you kissed me, over and over. And we talked about what we'd do—great things—in the future."

"I remember now."

"We've come so far, since then, haven't we? And done none of the things."

"Have any of us ever done anything worth while? We're all useless, rotten!"

"Yes. But if I could do something to help you now—"

"You can't."

"No. I know it. Only—"

She leaned closer to me; her arms were across my knees.

"Bremer!"

"Yes."

"Why don't you look at me?"

"I am looking at you."

"Well?"

I stared at her, but I did not answer. Passion illumined in her once more the white wonder of her youth; it surrounded her with an aura, a mist of gold, the gold of her hair, of her eyes, of the light down on her neck, of her pale satiny skin. She dropped her head on her arms.

"I'm here," she whispered. Her voice ceased.

I felt only the trembling of her body. In my obscurity I was shaken by it. It seemed like the suction of a wave,

gigantic, irresistible, coming out of the sea, sweeping swiftly inward. And it engulfed me as it came.

She turned toward me, lifting her head. As she lifted it I bent over her and my lips met hers.

The fire of her flesh burned me. I struggled to my feet. She clung to me, and I loathed her. I unclasped her hands that held me with a sort of desperate fury. I cared not whether she had fallen or stood beside me. But she spoke, crumpled in a heap near the sofa.

"Bremer!"

"What? I'm going."

"No! No!"

"What have we been doing?"

"Nothing. Can't you love me, even a little?"

"No. You know that as well as I. I never did."

She began to sob weakly, hysterically and without looking at me as I left the room. The little dog stood over her licking her face. Her weeping followed me down the stairs. Only the closed door of the house covered it with silence.

XI

BETTINA was to return on the second of February. She had written, fixing four o'clock as the hour of her arrival.

On the afternoon before I was walking home from Henrietta Morse's. It was past five of a raw, wet, pitiless day. Over everything there hung the viscous cloud of a thick, rolling fog. Through the drifting mist and gloom, the brilliant yellow lights of the monstrous buildings gleamed million-eyed, merciless and rapacious. The lower air was foul, dark, impenetrable. The streets reeked with mud, with the sweat of horses, with the splashing of wheels, with the steaming breath of pedestrians. An abomination of noise, a very hell and agony of tumult groaned, grinded, shrieked, yelled, roared. And from the sky above night was descending over that city, sordid, gigantic, terrible, as it was falling far away over some virgin hill slope white with snow.

As I fought my path through the

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human stream of paste white men and women, that mighty army of workers turning from their toil, I cursed the sins and follies and circumscriptions of my own wretched existence, the idiotic conceptions of living which held me there, one of those millions of thwarted and misshapen souls seized in the whirlpool of a life I hated, going down with the rest in turmoil and darkness and confusion. And I was coming from Henrietta Morse's, from her still, warm, scented rooms, into this swarm of dirty, undersized, half-starved humanity.

I had gone back to Henrietta. I had gone back, accepting the menace of that future which was hidden from me as yet by a veil, the veil of Henrietta's inexhaustible cleverness. The memory of that hour which had passed between us had not proved a sufficient barrier. Henrietta dismissed it with the skill of a woman eluding an unpleasant encounter. Nay, she did more; she ignored it with a manner perfect in its completeness. I had returned to apologize, for I knew not precisely what, upheld by the righteous sense that it would be the last time I should enter that house; and I had stayed, carried onward and supported by an infinitude of tact, to talk pleasantly of trifling things. And it was impossible to break off such a relationship sharply. All the threads of our lives, passed in a sort of treadmill, met at innumerable centers.

Now Bettina was coming home. Her short, precise note lay even then in my pocket. I had read it many times, drawing always from it the same sense of resentment, anger and humiliation.

MY DEAR BREMER:

I shall return for Amelia's wedding. You may look for me, then, on Friday the second. I think the train arrives about four. The string of black pearls has been broken. Will you be so kind as to send for Schurzman, who usually attends to them, and see that he restrings them in time for the wedding? If you do not know his address, Aurelie will give it to you. I shall hope to find you both well.

BETTINA F. MCLEAN.

Nothing of herself; she returned for Amelia's wedding. Would she go again after that? Was this, then, what she meant and desired—a separation with-

out scandal, a severance of living but not of name? Had she found, after all, what she wanted, alone, hidden away there in solitude? She had been gone over six weeks. Shame burned in me as I remembered the many excuses, the futile explanations I had been forced to give of her caprice, the remarks, half whispered, half intended for apprehension, which I had caught and chafed over in secret. But all this had ceased; no one talks long of anything. There was silence now, silence and acceptance of Bettina's relationship and mine, and of mine and Henrietta Morse's. Our small world had seen the like many times; it adjusted itself once more, smiling the old cynical, sad smile. And my own heart was hardening; it no longer felt anything; it moved sluggishly and lamely. There was beginning to take place in me slowly, inevitably that change which at middle life comes over so many men living as I did: the affections stiffen and die; the mind moves ever more dully; the senses awake to cruel and persistent dominion.

Along the Avenue the crowd was slowly thinning. Darkness had fallen early. A cutting wind turned people homeward. Only a few pedestrians hastened by. But suddenly I perceived a familiar figure stepping toward me, a figure which advanced with a sort of somber and hostile ostentation. It was Richter; he gazed at me without seeing me, and passed on. About his lips had played a smile, singular and menacing, the smile of a somnambulist, of a man who walks without knowing whither he is going. He was dreaming in the midst of the crowd.

I had recognized him without emotion. I no longer feared him. Whatever he had been to Amelia, in the future he could not approach her. He was about to be wiped out of existence. If I knew little of women, I was aware that the husband supplants all former passions. I looked after Richter where he retreated in the evening, insolent and solitary, with his heavy, rather dragging step, and I felt for him that contempt which a man, thoroughly rooted in the conviction of his own superiority, bestows

upon the agitator, the dreamer. Yet as the day of Amelia's wedding drew near, in spite of myself I was oppressed with misgivings, forebodings, unreasonable sadnesses.

I had reached home, and I went slowly up the steps of the house. The door was opened for me. I stood in the hall drawing off my gloves. The butler approached me.

"Mrs. McLean returned, sir, this afternoon."

Suddenly the blood rushed from my heart; I felt sick and faint. I compelled myself to say in a cold, constrained voice: "Where is she?"

"In the study, sir, I think. She arrived almost an hour ago."

I entered the elevator and shot upward. I opened the study door. Bettina was sitting there in her chair by the hearth. Her hat and coat were thrown on the writing table; on the floor lay her small traveling bag and two crumpled gloves. A faint familiar odor filled the room. She rose as I came in, but made no advance to meet me. Her hand trembled slightly on the back of the chair, and on her face was an expression almost of humility.

I went up to her and kissed her on her cheek. She did not move but remained impassive, and a pain, fearfully exquisite and beyond description, seemed to shoot from my heart through my whole body.

"I am glad that you have come home," I said.

"And I." Her voice was scarcely audible.

"I thought you were to come tomorrow."

"I couldn't wait. I came today."

"If you had sent a telegram I would have met you. You must have come up in a cab, didn't you?"

"A taxi—but it didn't matter."

She sat down; she seemed to slip into her chair from sheer weakness and inability to stand. I rang the bell.

"You're faint. You must have some sherry."

When the sherry was brought I poured it out. My arm trembled so that the glass rattled against the de-

canter. I gave it to her, standing over her and watching her drink. As she steadied the glass against her lips I saw the frightful thinness of her hand; it was like the claw of a little bird; the nails were dull and unpolished.

I sat down near her in a chair by the writing table. As I did so, I saw a letter lying on it, sealed and addressed to me in her handwriting. I picked it up; it was thick and heavy.

"You've been writing to me?"

"Down there. But I didn't send it. I decided not to."

"Then you don't wish me to read it?"

"Later. Not now. I said things in it I didn't mean."

I made a motion toward the fire. "We'll burn it."

"No. Don't. I want you to read it, later on."

I looked at her, and my heart ached. She was dressed with a sort of pitiful simplicity, in a plain dark skirt and blouse. Her hair was rolled flat on the top of her head. All the lines of her face showed; the delicate, high cheekbones, the thin, pinched nostrils, the slender, arrogant chin. There was no color in her small, compressed mouth, no vitality in her dull, sad eyes; only the black arches of her brows gave any expression to her face. She had said that she was well; she was sick and worn. She had the look of something hunted, fleeing and out of breath.

"Bremer, do you know why I went away? I went away to think."

"About what?"

"Don't you remember that you asked me to think it over?"

"But you needn't have gone away for that."

"I had to. I couldn't think here."

"Then you might have gone to a decent place—what you're used to. I knew you couldn't stand it there, and you haven't. It's made you sick."

"The place had nothing to do with how I look. It was well enough, what I wanted. I had to get away from all this, to see clearly."

"And you did?"

"Yes, at last. And I've come back."

"Oh! Then there was doubt?"

"That I might not? Yes."

"Why?"

"Because at first it seemed the only thing to do, just to stay there always. But afterward I saw it couldn't be—that it was right for me to come back."

"You wanted to come?"

"I saw that it was right for me to come, that this was my place."

"But you didn't want to?"

"I don't know. I didn't think of that. At times it didn't seem possible, anyway. It seemed as though I hadn't the strength."

"To come back here?"

"Yes."

"To this sort of life, you mean?"

"No."

"Ah! To me, then?"

"Yes—to you."

I turned away. The study was now in darkness. I heard Amelia come in and pass quietly to her room. I heard the familiar twilight noises of the house. And not far off in the same block there rose the voice of a woman singing.

"I never thought of that," I said. "If it has come to that—"

"But it hasn't. I thought it had; but it hasn't. I wrote you that letter. And when I had written it, when I read it, I knew that I didn't mean it—any of it. I knew that I wanted to come back—to everything. It showed me. So I brought it with me."

"And you wish me to read it?"

"Yes."

I rose and carried the letter to the window. Standing in the light from the street I broke the seal. It was difficult to read. The writing was scrawled and often blotted. The thin sheets of cheap paper, such paper as you would buy in a small country town, rattled in the silence.

"I see," I said at last. "You ask for a divorce."

"Yes, I asked for it. But it was because you had suggested it." Her voice was very low.

"I! When?"

"You don't remember. It was a long time ago. But you did. I thought you wished it."

"I can't have. I don't remember anything about it."

"No. But I remember. And I couldn't forget it."

"So, for a few hasty words spoken in a moment of discouragement you were going to wreck our lives?"

"Yes, until I found I couldn't."

"Couldn't?"

"That, whatever you wished, I didn't wish it." Her voice sank lower still; it was barely audible. She looked down at her hands clasped agonizedly between her knees; over her sad eyes the lids hung heavily.

I came up to her. "But I didn't. If I did say anything of the sort it was because I thought that you were unhappy—"

"I was. But that doesn't matter. I know now that it doesn't. That it mustn't; that it *can't!* Why shouldn't we speak plainly? I know now that marriage means unhappiness, disillusion to every woman. Suddenly one day, she sees it; it stares her in the face. Then—she says nothing; she accepts it; she must. If things are to go on she must go under. But I wouldn't accept it. I struggled. All the trouble lay there. It was my own fault.

"I've done wrong! Oh, far more wrong than you know! And it's shown me—"

She stopped. There was an almost imperceptible sound of someone moving. In the embrasure of the doorway I saw the outline of a form obscure and graceful. Upon our silence there fell the ripple of clear, cool tones with an accent of familiar possession.

"Bremer? Heavens, what darkness! Why don't you have a light?"

It was Henrietta Morse. I had forgotten that she was to follow me, that she was to look over the rooms with the florist, that she was to stay and dine. I cursed her.

"In a moment."

I reached out and turned the catch of the electric lamp on the writing table. In the burst of light that followed we three stood looking at one another.

"Mrs. McLean!" exclaimed Henri-

etta. She advanced slowly, her hand in its long, soft glove outstretched, a slight, perfect smile on her lips. She was dressed for dinner; her white fox coat was thrown open, showing the diamonds at the base of her throat and the pale amber-colored drapery of her gown. Under her arm she carried one of her little white dogs.

"What an agreeable surprise! We didn't expect you until tomorrow."

Bettina stood inert. "I decided to come today."

Henrietta put down the little dog, and it ran gambling in ridiculous joy to my feet.

"How nice! That's a good boy, Bremer; take this horrid hot thing. How awkward you are! The hook has caught in my hair." I was forced to bend over her, to lean near her while I disengaged the clasp of the heavy coat which had caught in her blond hair at the base of her neck. She stood with her head bowed a little to one side, her large, yellow eyes dilated and shining. "Ah! Wait a second; here are my gloves." She drew them off deliberately, holding me at her side, smiling at Bettina. She put her foot in its satin slipper on the fender. "Brr! It's a nasty night! Bremer, close that window."

I closed it. Then I turned toward Bettina. "Mrs. Morse," I said, "has been kind enough to relieve Amelia of the more tedious details of the wedding."

"And to help this wretched man!" interrupted Henrietta. She laughed one of her liquid, acquired trebles. "Fancy, my dear, his utter desperation during your absence!" She looked full at Bettina. "But how tired you are! *Don't* let me keep you down. I should never forgive myself. Bremer and I can manage very well for tonight. Where *is* the man, Bremer? Waiting?"

A look of agony crossed Bettina's face. She reached out for her hat and jacket.

"Then I'm not needed."

"Dear Mrs. McLean—"

"Mrs. Morse," I said, "is going to stay and dine with us. Perhaps later, if you feel well enough—"

Henrietta turned deliberately; her eyes glittered; she stooped, picked up the little dog and held him beneath her chin. "Oh, no! I wouldn't think of it now. It's absolutely unnecessary, Bremer. I feel an interloper. And Mrs. McLean is quite worn out. Just ring and tell them to keep the carriage."

I saw Bettina's face grow hard and white and still. She turned. She had regained her self-possession; she smiled slowly.

"Pray don't! I shouldn't come down in any case."

XII

THAT evening I was forced to accompany Henrietta to Washington Square. She had left behind her at her own house the wax orange blossoms which were to fasten Amelia's wedding veil. It had been Henrietta's caprice to send to Paris to a firm which she knew for these flowers. But it was Amelia who urged me to go back with Henrietta, who would not wait until the morrow, and who would not intrust the box to a servant.

I left Henrietta abruptly. I abandoned myself to a sort of darkness. I walked on, forgetful of where I was, traversing block after block.

Only the familiar iron pickets of a fence made me realize that I was near home. I looked up at the house. And as I looked Richter descended the steps.

He crossed the street. He turned, shook his fist at the house, leaped into his motor, made a sign to the chauffeur and was whirled away toward Madison Avenue.

That instant in which I saw him I experienced the sum total of astonishment. A profound shock penetrated through the dull layers of my misery. I comprehended only one fact, a fact strange, impossible, repulsive, which attained its mark with the directness of a point of steel. Like a knife quivering in a fresh wound, the proof of Amelia's incredible weakness stabbed my heart. Something painful and poignant indicated to me what I was to do. I turned and walked

rapidly in the direction which the motor had taken.

I went straight to his rooms. He had an apartment on East Thirty-second Street, near Madison Avenue, in a house not at all calculated for moderate means. I ascended in the elevator and rang the bell. A Japanese servant opened the door. My name? He judged Mr. Richter to have returned but was not sure; would I step in?

I walked into the front room. A lamp was burning on a large table, covered with innumerable very neat files of papers. This lamp, under its green shade, gave forth the only light. The furniture was upholstered in leather; at the windows, behind draperies of red plush, there was a profusion of potted plants.

Richter appeared in the doorway. His face expressed surprise, combative ness and a sort of eagerness. He ad vanced a few steps.

"Mr. McLean! To what do I owe your visit?"

His voice was low, almost guttural; it had a persuasiveness which lay in its strength.

This was the first time I had seen Franz Richter alone and separated from a crowd. As I looked at him I felt the dynamic force of his inexplicable personality. Two years had not broken his hold upon Amelia. Ten years would find it undiminished. In what lay that hold? He revealed, rather seemed to exult in his German origin. He was tall and muscular, large-boned, heavy, rather slow of movement. He appeared to have the robust health of an animal; no one would have dreamed that the heart in that body could not keep it going for long. One could see that, for women, there was something about him virile and compelling. And Amelia loved this man. She had loved him, and she still loved him.

I spoke decisively.

"Mr. Richter, I come on an unpleas ant errand. Tonight, not half an hour ago, I saw you leave my house. I do not ask you not to enter it again. I have come here to *forbid* you to."

He looked at me in astonishment.

"I have not been in your house. I have never entered it in my life."

A line, sinister and obstinate, drew itself about his mouth.

I went on:

"I was not twenty feet away when you left the house. You crossed the street and got into a motor. You had been there to see my niece. I regret that she has no more sense of what is right than to receive you. But it is my duty to protect her, even from her own pitiable vacillation. In four days she is to be married; until then I must see that she commits no indiscretion. I cannot conceive that she would willingly have admitted you; it is you who must have forced yourself upon her. I for bid you to make any further attempt to see her, or to speak to her. If I cannot now convince you of my earnestness, I shall at once have recourse to other measures more unpleasant."

I walked toward the door. Richter took a step forward.

"Stop a minute! There's something I want to say to you. I've nothing to do with Miss McLean, nor she with me. That's God's truth!"

I looked at him. "Don't trouble yourself to lie. I regret the necessity of meeting you. Permit me to bid you good night."

"Ah!" His eyes blazed out at me fiercely and suddenly. "You've forced yourself into my rooms in order to call me a liar! Well, since you have done me this unprecedented honor, I must beg you to remain a few moments." A sort of bitter pleasure showed itself in his face. He smiled. He walked over to the mantelpiece; I noticed that the hand he stretched toward a match trembled and shook. With difficulty he lighted a cigarette.

"You come here and issue orders. You are, no doubt, accustomed to that. But can you suppose that there is any reason why I should obey you?"

"I don't pretend to understand you. I have the right to exclude an objectionable person from my house. I do so."

"So I am objectionable? Well, I am used to that." He paused, knocked the ash from his cigarette and continued.

"Two years ago you took from me the only *good* thing I've ever had in life. I don't mean pleasant or profitable or joyous; I mean *good*. I hold you responsible for that. You filched something from me—my all—the spontaneous love of a fellow creature. You were somebody; I was nobody; so it was certain that I was not to be allowed to have that little bit of good which was my all. You snatched it away from me. Completely!"

He swung a chair round facing me and sat down.

"Well, you robbed me. And now you come and tell me that I shall not attempt to get back what was mine. I am not attempting it; I do not want it—because it has ceased to be mine, and could never be mine again—because, now, it *doesn't exist*. I said you robbed me completely. But you are very much of a fool, Mr. McLean. I suppose I have a right to call you a fool, since you call me a liar?"

He looked up at me, blowing the smoke slowly from his lips. Even before his insolence, his vulgarity, it was impossible not to appreciate the charm of his voice.

"It is no doubt natural for you to be offensive," I said.

He smiled. "Very. I was not taught manners in my youth. Do you know how I began life at twenty?"

"I am not at all interested."

"Ah! But for me it is very desirable that I should tell you. To make you uncomfortable for an hour, who have made me uncomfortable for years—that is something! I began as a clerk in a wholesale woolen house. To this day, the smell of woolen, thick and pungent, makes me sick. I was paid four dollars a week. Four dollars—four hundred cents—for food, lodging, clothing! When I had a penny to spare—not often—I bought a daily paper. I read about you, among other things. It afforded me a sort of frightful pleasure to read about that world which swept on over my head, miles high in the ether, amused, brilliant, careless. 'It is of the hell of the poor that the paradise of the rich is made.' I was one of the grubs who con-

tributed to your glory. So for me you had a profound interest."

I smiled with rather ironic disdain. "You are a Socialist, Mr. Richter?"

"I am nothing—merely a man who has been forced to hate his fellow man. I will go on. I looked up at that world where you and your satellites swam in a sort of glory, and I vowed to myself that I would revolve there with the rest. But how? In order to hoist oneself into that glittering sphere one must have one of three things: birth, money, distinction. I possessed none of these. But I had wit enough to see that a distinction need not be genuine; it will do as well if it be meretricious and fraudulent. To make a noise, to be recognized, to be noticed—that is all that is needed. These people, who are tired of everything, will rush at whatever amuses them."

"My first step was to join a settlement club in the neighborhood. This club was one of the various enterprises connected with the very fashionable St. Martin's Church. I made myself active in it. I cultivated every gift of insinuation I possessed. I wormed my way along. I starved myself that I might have decent clothes. I began to write a little and to give talks among the men. I believed neither what I wrote nor what I said. But it all went. I was noticed by the directors of that club. I was made one of the regular settlement workers, upon a small salary. I had left the woolen warehouse forever. And I was spoken of as 'invaluable—a man who knows how to deal with the worst element.' The vice-president of the club was a Miss Adele Knight, an old and very disagreeable woman. I created in her an immense belief in my own powers and sincerity, and an intense sympathy for my miserable circumstances. When she died—"

"She was fool enough to leave you all her money."

"Exactly—as your wife was fool enough to provide you with an income."

I turned furiously. "I refuse to listen to this—absolutely! Mr. Richter, you are a charlatan for whom my contempt is inexpressible. Allow me, once more, to bid you good night."

I got up. Richter rose also. He spoke in a thick voice. He had a strange, almost insane air.

"No! Since you came to my rooms you will listen to what I have to say. It is imperative that I should ask you a certain question."

"What is your question?"

Richter walked back and forth in the room.

"I won't detain you much longer. After the money came it was easy. I had a sort of spurious talent for writing. People began to talk about me. Everything opened up. But it was too late. Why? Because, when I had been a poverty-stricken wretch, slaving away there on my settlement pittance, something inexpressibly exquisite, divine, *good*, had entered into my life. It had come to me like a breath from Heaven! And it had transformed me—temporarily. My God, *don't* you see—won't you see? It was my one chance to be honest, to be upright, to be sincere, to get on a level with my fellow men. It *could* have made me different. And you snatched it away from me! You, who had become to me through all these years a sort of obsession, a nightmare, a something at the top of everything, you stooped from your diversions a moment to snatch it away from me, as a fool who laughs snatches a bone from a starving dog!"

He paused, choked. And I looked at him with amazement. This man was beside himself, furious, livid. Yet he gazed at me with a sort of entreaty and despair. He clenched his fists. He wished to strike me, and he desisted. He rushed on in a voice scarcely audible.

"A buffoon of society, that is what I am now! A nincompoop in motley! A little dog led on a leash! 'Who is that, my dear, there at the foot of your table?' 'Oh, R——, who wrote that shocking book. I have taken him up. Is he not quaint? He amuses me.' Some day they will let me down as quickly. And when I am down they will kick at me in the dust. They eat my food and they laugh in my face. They know that I am dishonest. And I might have had a place, I tell you, a

place among them. I might have been what I can now only pretend to be. I might have stood on my feet, and you"—wrath strangled him—"you, who had everything, while I had nothing, took from me my soul!"

He came straight up to me. He breathed with difficulty, and his face was as pale as death. He addressed me with a sort of final desperation.

"Is there any reason why I should not do anything to injure you—that is my question; I want it answered—to injure you a little who have warped and destroyed my whole life?"

XIII

It was Monday, the fourth of February. As I drove up the Avenue in the afternoon, the air was thick with glittering particles of snow through which the sun shone brightly. Between this filmy and scintillating veil, like the veil of a bride, there appeared far above in the heavens a rift of divine blue, that blue which, even in winter foretells the spring.

The city rejoiced in miraculous and fleeting beauty. It was ravished with the sense of carnival. Those great, feathery flakes of snow, which fell slowly, twirling and glistening in the winter sunlight, seemed to be so much confetti cast from happy, unseen hands. The world sparkled and laughed; the bells on the fiery horses tinkled sweetly; the streams of people smiled and gestured and glanced at one another with shining eyes. The air was like wine, the women, swathed in their furs, more beautiful than ever, the shop windows more dazzling, the snow more white. Life was nothing but a *féte* and a glorious winter pageant!

And this day, which was drawing to its close so resplendently, so swiftly, was the day before Amelia's marriage. That marriage seemed now almost an accomplished fact. It had the certainty of an event already at hand. If, indeed, it ever had been, it was no longer menaced by the unforeseen. On the morning after I had gone to his

rooms Richter had left town. His apartment was closed. The papers announced that at the end of the week he would sail for Marseilles and thence to Egypt.

And I was inclined now to think that I had made much of nothing; even inclined to admit, with some satisfaction, that I had no doubt been mistaken, that I was some distance from the house, that it was night, and that very probably I had seen a man resembling Richter descend the steps of the house next door. And now, tomorrow at this hour Amelia would be far away with her husband. She would be Wilfred's wife. And tomorrow at this time I should be alone with Bettina. In that loneliness I saw hope. I veiled it before me, yet it shone for me steadily and brightly, as a light shines through the mists of dawn. I approached it with joy.

The carriage had reached the freer spaces above Forty-second Street and I made a sign to the coachman to hasten. I was consumed by feverish activity, and by the wish to oversee every detail connected with the morrow. A few moments, and we drew up before the house. The limousine waited before the entrance. The vestibule door stood open. I ran up the steps. Within everything wore an air of confusion. There was only one footman in the hall. The drawing rooms were almost barren of furniture. Some workmen were hammering at the framework of an arch, under which Amelia and Wilfred were to stand on the morrow. The whole lower floor was given over to disorder and to the litter of preparation.

I shot up in the elevator and entered my study. I approached the desk in search of memoranda which I had left there. On the blotter, held in place by a small bronze weight, I perceived a sheet of paper. I paused, picked it up and looked at it. In an instant it seemed that the contents were flashed upon my brain; they were burned into my soul, while I stood there, frozen, rigid.

Tomorrow, Thursday, you must leave at about four, in order to reach Thornledge at five. From there we will go as we have arranged,

quietly and with no chance of being observed. There is nothing to fear. Why do you accuse yourself? And of what? I offer you the right of every human being, freedom.

Those sentences, which trembled before my eyes, were whips which, one after another, opened the same wound. I crushed in my hand that ball of paper which contained those insolent, possessive words, and that signature, F.R. A name, torn from my heart, leaped to my lips—Amelia, my brother's child. The terrible sense of my own futility swept over me—the broken trust, the useless care, the ruined life. It was all undone. It was over. Amelia had gone. She had fled. She had cast herself into the unknown, the gulf, the abyss.

I raised my head; at that instant I heard a sound on the stairs, a footfall, light, firm and elastic. I rushed out of the room. *Amelia had not gone; she was going!* The limousine at the curb, the clock which was even then striking four—Halfway down the stairs I came up with her. I caught her by the arm and turned her round on me. In the haze that played before my eyes I saw her face, white, frightened, like a flower, in its dark nest of fur. A burning wrath mingled with contempt possessed and shook me.

"You mad girl," I said in furious, low tones, "I am in time to save you from your own destruction. See here!" I thrust the letter in her face. "See here! I will settle for this. I will meet this damned blackguard and wring his neck, do you hear? Go to your room!"

She stared at the letter, and I felt her tremble. Slowly she turned her eyes on me, rigid, strange, horror-filled.

"Go to your room," I repeated. "Stay there. I tell you, I will settle for this!"

I pushed her from me, and she turned without a word and went slowly up the stairs.

The rest is a dim bloodshot dream to me. I rushed down the stairs, through the open door of the house and into the automobile. I gave my directions to the chauffeur, and was whirled through the dizzy streets. I know that I was

CREATURES OF INHERITANCE

possessed by a cold, calculating, terrible anger. I wished to lay my hands upon Richter and to dash his head against the ground, and I wished it calmly, deliberately, determinedly.

The thought that I might not get there in time, that Richter might be gone, that he might escape me, was agony to me. I imagined him waiting, alone there in that empty house, and that obscure vision caused in me a cruel madness, which developed with the driving speed of the car.

Already the streets, the open boulevards, the sordid outskirts of the city were left far behind. I looked out at the soaked ground which fled under me. The road, choked with mire, wound before me through the expanding country. From the fields, from the hedges, from the dead earth there was beginning to arise a chill, whitish mist. Night was falling.

It seemed to me that an eternity had gone by since I had left that immense and silent house upon the Avenue. In reality barely three-quarters of an hour had passed. The machine, despite the state of the roads, had made the run at full speed. Arrived already at its destination, it turned in between two gateposts, under dark and overhanging trees. Beneath its wheels I heard the crunch of wet gravel. The limousine stopped; the door was opened for me and I descended. A fresh, damp wind struck my face, and from all about me I breathed in the odor of rotting wood.

"This is the place?" I said.

The chauffeur made a motion with his hand into the darkness.

"The house is there, sir, at the end of the drive."

"You will wait here," I said, "until I return."

I began to walk toward the light. The driveway wound for some distance through the thick shades of timber and underwood. A sort of wilderness, un-reclaimed and natural, stretched away on both sides. Suddenly in the midst of the woods the house loomed before me, surrounded completely by a dense growth of trees. All was silent. There

was not a sound anywhere but the whispering of the pines and the crackle of a twig under the foot of some animal. I looked up at the windows. They were all closed with wooden shutters. The whole place was dark, deserted, prepared for a long absence. The little light which I had seen came from a front room on the ground floor, through a round hole cut in one of the shutters. A faint glimmer, too, issued from the door, which stood partly open. It seemed to me that I felt rather than heard from a garage somewhere in the rear the throbbing of a motor. At that moment a shadow passed across the hole in the shutter.

A few quick silent steps and I had crossed the brick flagging of the porch. I entered the hall. The light came from a room on the left. Candles were burning there upon the mantelpiece. On a round table, before a fire that had died out, were the remains of tea, amid soiled cups and plates. A traveling bag and a fur coat were thrown on a chair near the door. With his back toward me, Richter stood before the mantelpiece extinguishing one by one the flames of the candles. Then I saw her. Oh, my God, then I saw her! And even as I perceived her she also perceived me, and she advanced with uncertain and shaking steps toward the center of the room. It was she—it was my wife—It was Bettina! She was there with that man! She stood there, pallid, trembling, agonized. At that instant Richter turned.

A sound inarticulate and furious burst from his lips, a snarl rather than a cry. He became livid. He stood staring at me, by the burnt-out fire.

Then all at once a smile, evil, contemptuous, exultant, a smile which expressed everything and revealed everything, distorted his whole face. It illuminated, like a flash of lightning, immense vistas of hatred. It lit up with the lurid gleam of implacable malignity his audacity and his revenge. His whole person breathed malevolent triumph. He took a step toward me.

He stretched his arm out as though to ward off and keep in the background

the woman who stood there distracted and terrified.

It needed only that gesture, that gesture of command and possession. In a frenzy of wrath I threw myself upon him. But before the blow fell, before my hand struck the empty air, at the very instant when I raised my arm, a sort of terrible fear shot through his eyes; he swayed; his fingers clutched at his breast; he fell heavily. A little foam colored with blood appeared upon his lips.

Over his prostrate body a slight ripple, a contraction, passed and subsided. He lay still. There was a profound silence.

On the atmosphere there hung heavily the smell of smoking candle wicks.

I stooped and looked at him; the face was deathly, it lay turned a little on one side. From the parted lips there issued no perceptible breath. Fear that was more than half stupefaction took hold upon me. I gazed at him in wonder. A shadow moved in front of me; it was Bettina.

"What is it?" she asked in a horrified whisper. "What has happened?"

"He's dead, I think."

"You struck him?"

"No! No! Didn't you see? I did not even touch him."

"What was it, then?"

"His heart." I got up. "Is there a servant anywhere?"

She made a motion toward the back of the house. "Only the chauffeur."

"Has he seen you?"

"No. No one has seen me here. Except—" She looked again at the floor. Suddenly she lost all control of herself. Clinging to my arm, she burst into tears. I hardly perceived her.

"Then you must go outside and wait for me. Go away from the house and walk up and down the drive. I will join you."

She pressed her body against mine. "What are you going to do?"

"I must see about this."

She gazed at me with eyes of utterable misery. "You won't be long?"

"No, no. Now go. No one must see you here."

She turned, bowed her head as though she wished to shut out from her eyes the sight of that room and hastened from the house.

Again I knelt by Richter's side, raised his shoulders, felt for the beating of his heart, tried to detect the slightest breath. Cold seemed to flow from his body into mine. I dragged him to the fireplace and placed him upon a couch. I loosened the fastenings about his neck; the head rolled to one side and hung downward. I took a candle from the mantelpiece, held it close to his face and gazed at him. There was no sign of life. I looked all about me. An electric button on the wall caught my eye, and I pressed it. After what seemed an interminable time, a door slammed in the distance, and I heard steps advancing through the house.

The chauffeur in his fur coat and cap appeared in the doorway. He stared at me in astonishment; his glance took in the extended figure upon the couch; the insolent and sophisticated perceptions of the confidential servant appeared upon his face.

"There's a telephone here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then telephone at once for the doctor."

He pointed to the figure of Richter.

"He's expected this." He took one step, then turned. "You intend to remain, sir?"

"No. I am going now."

He made a movement of indifference, of imperturbable comprehension, and walked toward the telephone.

"One moment," I said. "You recognize me?"

He gave a gesture of servile reassurance. "Perfectly. But—"

"You will tell the doctor to communicate with me."

I left the house and walked down the drive through the darkness. It was almost impossible to see anything before one. A white, foglike mist rose from the ground. Suddenly a figure appeared in front of me. It was Bettina. I came close to her and touched her on the arm.

"I left as soon as possible. Come."

She leaned toward me. "Where?" she asked in a stifled voice.

"Home."

"Do you wish me to go home, Bremer?"

"Don't you wish to go?"

"Yes, if you want me. If not, I'll go somewhere else."

"Where else could you go?"

"I don't know. Somewhere."

I caught her as she swayed from me, standing on the wet gravel, her clothes damp with the night.

"Bettina, do you know what you are saying? Can you think rationally?"

"Oh, yes; I'm quite sane."

"Then tell me. Speak the absolute truth. Is there any reason why you should not go home with me?"

"What is the use? You would not believe me. You *could not* believe me!"

"Answer me. I *will* believe you."

"I have not done what you mean. There is no real reason."

"Then come. The motor is near the gates."

I guided her by the arm, and we walked forward. Her steps were uneven and trembling; she moved like a woman more dead than alive. Presently, only a few paces in front of us, we saw the lights of the limousine. She bowed her head, so that her face was invisible.

We came up with the waiting car and I placed her within.

"Home, Hauptner," I said. And I added in a shaking voice which it was impossible for me to control, "Fast! Fast!"

The door was closed upon us, and the machine swung into the main road. A few moments and it began to travel at a terrific speed toward the city. In her corner, withdrawn from me as far as possible, Bettina lay rather than sat upon the cushions. Her heavy furs concealed even the outline of her form; only her face was visible above the seal-skin collar, a thin, pale face, almost devoid of its former prettiness, the lips a purplish color, the eyes closed under heavy lids. As the car bounded and jolted, her head moved from side to side weakly and inertly, her body

yielded itself without an effort to the uneven, rocking motion.

Time passed. She sat up; her fingers went to her throat, she moved nearer me.

"I must talk to you. You are thinking about me. I can't put it off; it is killing me! And there is so little to say."

"Very well. Go on."

"You will believe me?"

"I have told you I believed you."

"I don't ask you to be kind to me. How can you be? Nor to make any allowances for me, for I know there are none that can be made. But, oh, believe that I tell you the truth!"

"Yes, yes; go on."

I spoke impatiently. But she did not begin at once. She sat gazing at her clasped hands. After a time her voice came broken and hesitant.

"I was going away with him. You saw that. He persuaded me to go with him. It all began back there when Amelia first came home. He tried to see her; I saw him, and showed him that I was not averse to seeing him. He made the most of it. Then he followed me South. He tried to get me then to go with him. But I would not. I came home. I was ready to start all over again, to do just as you wished in everything. I told him I should never see him again. Then that woman came—on the very night that I returned! And I saw that you had been making love to her while I was away struggling and trying to do right."

"How did you know that I had made love to her?"

"I don't know. I *knew*. If you hadn't, you had allowed her to make love to you. It was the same thing. You can't deny it!"

"I don't deny it."

"And that maddened me. It did something terrible to me. I wasn't myself. I was insane. I sent for him the same night, when you had gone home with *her*. I had watched you get into her carriage. And we arranged it all then. That was only three days ago—it seems a year!"

She quivered; her hands went to her face and the tears rolled between her fingers.

"I don't know why he wanted me to go with him. He did not love me. I think he despised me. But he kept hounding me. Oh, you won't believe me, but he has never so much as kissed me! He has hardly touched me. He cared nothing for me. It's the truth, the truth!"

"And you— In God's name, why did you do such a thing?"

"You can ask that! You did not love me, and I wanted to leave you free. I thought that if I went with him you could get a divorce and marry that woman. She would have arranged her part! You did not love me, and you had never loved me. I was nothing but a burden and a shame to you. Sometimes the way you looked at me killed me. It was all an agony to me. I could not be what you wished; I could not make myself over. So the only thing to do was to rid you of me. Once I thought of suicide; but I hadn't the courage. I was desperate, and this seemed the only way."

I was silent for some time; then I said:

"Whatever you think, I have never cared a straw for Mrs. Morse. You left me alone for weeks."

"Yes, yes. Of course I can see it now. It was all my fault. What must you think of me?"

She finished in a moaning, tremulous voice, and lay back against the cushions. Every now and then cruel sobs shook her from head to foot.

I sat still, looking out of the window into the darkness which fled past us. In a few minutes the last of the country faded into the night; we entered the borders of the city. Myriads of lights began to gleam around us, and as the car neared the center of traffic face after face, illumined by the glare of electric signs, passed swiftly by us. Presently we swept through the quieter shadows of the Avenue, and in another moment drew up before the house.

XIV

In the study on the third floor a light was burning dimly. This light came

from the flame of a student lamp which was placed upon the desk. In the pale diffusion of rays which fell from beneath the green shade a woman in a rose-colored dinner dress was seated upright facing the door. She waited with her hands clasped upon the desk in front of her. The drawn lines of her face, the unnatural dilatation of her eyes, the immobility of her body, erect and rigid, all indicated a supreme state of tension.

When I opened the door I was confronted by that apparition of Amelia. I stopped short. Something suddenly penetrated to my brain which recalled me to reality. I had forgotten even the existence of other lives, and I gazed with profound astonishment at this figure which emerged from the shadows. I recognized all at once and completely that I had not been dreaming. I closed the door. Amelia rose.

"What has happened?"

Without answering I drew off my coat; I folded it, placing it over the back of a chair. Then I removed my gloves, looking at the fingers.

"I have brought her back."

I spread out the silk muffler which had protected my linen collar, and I discovered with surprise that it was made up of little squares of red and black. I folded it carefully. I was perfectly unaware of what I was doing.

Her body relaxed; she raised her head. "You were in time, then?"

"Oh, yes—yes."

I sat down in a chair. She approached me; her eyes fixed themselves upon me with a fearful and questioning glance. "Good heavens! Why do you say nothing? Tell me what has happened. How can I stand it? It is dreadful!"

"Nothing has happened. There is nothing to be alarmed about. It is all over."

"Well!"

"I tell you there is nothing to be alarmed about. It has all been arranged. Nothing will ever be known. You see, it was fortunate—I forgot; I may be called on the telephone. I must let the servants know where I am—"

I got up, but I was unable to take even a few steps, and I sat down once more. A shudder ran over me. Instantly she fell on her knees beside the chair.

"Speak to me! Have you forgotten? I, too, am suffering!"

"Why, you see, he is dead."

"Ah!"

"He will make no more trouble."

Her face became perfectly white; her limbs seemed to give way beneath her. She trembled from head to foot, and a sort of dry whisper parted her lips: "How?"

I moved my hand. "You are mistaken. I did not kill him. He had heart disease. You remember, it was you who told me. He died. He had in any case only a short while to live. I wished to kill him—but I did not. He fell backward. It was very sudden—like that!"

There was silence. I perceived that she was weeping. I observed her with a sort of painful irritation.

"Come," I said; "you must not do that."

She rose to her feet; she straightened her body slowly. Something was taking place within her. She was like a blind person who is obtaining his sight. She breathed deeply; her face changed suddenly. A barely distinguishable shade, which had veiled it for months, for years, vanished all at once. Her lips parted in an ineffable expression, an expression pitiful yet confident. She raised her eyes and said: "Now, I can tell him. I can tell him everything."

"Who?"

"Wilfred."

A gesture of terrible resentment escaped me: "Go to him, then. What are you doing in this room? Why did you come here? You exasperate me! Leave me alone!"

She stared at me, then went out of the door, closing it behind her. I heard her voice lifted far off somewhere, in a bell-like note, "Wilfred!"

My head was burning. I went to the window and threw it wide open. There were no stars in the sky. A vast, rumbling noise ascended from the earth,

the voice of the city. I returned and seated myself at the desk.

Gradually vague outlines began to take shape in my brain, hideous and dreadful shapes which rushed before my eyes with fingers pointed toward the darkness. I was consumed by hatred, and by a terrible desire for vengeance.

But the man was dead.

However, the woman remained at my mercy.

Suddenly I was seized by a supreme dizziness. My brain had no power of forming ideas; they passed like waves, and I clutched my brow in both hands to arrest them. A sort of frightful mental and physical nausea robbed me of consciousness. I was incredibly weak. I breathed heavily.

At that instant I became painfully aware of the lighted lamp. It seemed to me that it was an eye which watched me intently. I extinguished it. I wished to be absolutely alone, in the dark, in solitude, in security. I blew out the lamp and locked the door. Then I stood with my fingers on the handle, endeavoring to comprehend exactly where I was. Noises, which seemed to have no connection with me, sounded faintly from other parts of the house. After a while I crossed over to the table, sat down and tried to collect my thoughts.

What had happened? If anyone had told me that this thing would come to pass, I should have looked on him as a madman. Nothing that could ever have suggested itself to me could have seemed more impossible than this. Yet it had occurred. I began to come gradually to an understanding of my position, and I acknowledged these things to myself: that my wife had determined to leave me; that she had determined to cut herself off from me forever by a final and terrible act; that desperation had driven her to do this; that apparently she had not cared for the man; that the man had, in fact, despised her, and had used her merely as an instrument; that the man was dead; and that, if this had not happened, and if I had not arrived, as I did, even now, at this moment—

I stopped. There suddenly took place in me an appalling movement, a convulsion which stirred up everything which was at the very base of my nature, and which no man feels more than once, an outburst of loathing, of horror, of anguish, of despair, an upheaval like a birth.

Alas! was there then left in me after all these years the possibility of such feelings? Could I then still be tortured by such merciless physical jealousy? And I got up and began to pace the room. I saw quite distinctly that I could now obtain a divorce, that she could not have one word to say against it, that I could regain my independence, that I could return to my own way of life, that I could live as I chose, and that I should no more be troubled by those peculiarities in her which had always annoyed me—that at any moment I could be *free*.

And I felt no joy.

A thousand thoughts traversed my brain. Fever seemed to mount through every artery of my body. The veins in my temples throbbed violently. I threw myself once more in my chair.

Certain words returned to me: "You did not love me. . . . You had never loved me . . . It was all an agony to me. . . . Once I thought of suicide. . . . I wanted to rid you of me—"

Was it true, then, that I had never loved her? Perhaps never before. Such natures as hers decay without love, as a plant decays in a dark cellar without sunlight. Her heart had rotted. She had not been able any longer to distinguish things clearly. She had gone astray in a sort of subterranean darkness. She had but followed out blindly and inevitably the requirements of her nature.

And now, what was to be done? Great God, what was to be done?

Suddenly I remembered something. "If she had had a child, perhaps she would never have behaved in this manner!"

I trembled. It seemed to me that I was unexpectedly confronted by a terrible accusation. It was true that I had never wished for a child. Now I

saw why children are necessary. Now I wished passionately that I had had a child. I recalled what Honoria had said to me: "Provide her with an occupation. . . . Live with her whatever life she can." She had had no occupation. And what was that life which she was fitted for and which she had desired to live? In spite of her money, a simple life, intimate with nature, a life without complications, close, passive, perhaps a little dull, filled with elemental, lucid pleasures. And those superficial relationships, which through years I had been trained to consider vital and requisite and into which I had tried to force her soul, what had I found them? Dust in the mouth. All that I had thought necessary I had found wretched, worthless, deceptive, without truth or stability. The life which I had known, which I had believed in, produced such women as Henrietta Morse. They were the achievement of its decadence. Women who allowed their husbands to support them while they became the mistresses of other men, who accepted from those men luxuries and gewgaws bought with the income provided by neglected wives; women who were vain, silly, malicious, sensual, above all, cowardly. I thought of Bettina, as she had been when I had married her; young, exquisite, indescribably virginal. And I saw her as she had been on the night of Honoria's death, when she had cried to me, "I can't bear it!"

What had she not been able to bear? Her loneliness.

It was I who had been responsible for that loneliness. I had put her away from me. I had never approached her with my soul. I had treated her as a sort of pretty and brainless animal, without individuality or perception. I had denied her all that it was possible for me to deny her. And I had believed that she had not noticed it! She had been utterly alone. Her loneliness had been peculiar and complete. She had not even had anyone in whom to confide. From the first the women of my family had surrounded her with their inimical and frigid glances. No one

had looked at her with kindness. A profound dejection had overcome her; she had strayed on among all these faces, lost, terribly isolated, moving round and round in circles, with her heart torn and bleeding. She had been oppressed by all those fears of young married women, fears rendered poignant and horribly real by the solitude which encompassed her. Where was she? She knew nothing! To whom could she go? She was not able to understand all these things which weighed upon her, which tortured her and confused her. There had been no one to explain to her this terrible and obscure riddle of life! She had moved among a world of phantasms, expecting at any instant to fall forward into some unknown gulf. When I married her, she was only eighteen!

An icy draught was rattling at the windows. It was quite dark. There was not a sound anywhere. It was the hour before dawn.

I rose and went to the window. Below me I perceived the city spread out, slumbering, beneath the blackness of the night. Then suddenly, without any indicision, I walked toward the door. I unlocked it and crossed the hall and descended the stairs to the floor below.

The house was immersed in sleep. Stillness enveloped with strange shadows each familiar vista. I went into my bedroom, and without hesitating I walked over to the door which connected it with my wife's room. I turned the handle and stepped across the threshold.

Bettina lay fully dressed on the bed. A small electric lamp on the bedstand cast over her its circle of pallid light. She lay with her face hidden in the pillows, her arms over her head. Her slender feet, in their tightly fitting boots, were extended beneath the hem of her skirt.

I approached the bed; I leaned over and put my arms, which were trembling and cold, about her; I pressed my face to her hair.

"Nina!" I said.

She moved; I felt a shudder pass over her. I knelt beside the bed and clasped

her closer to me. I kissed her upon the small white line of skin which was visible beneath the little curls on her neck. I took one of her hands and raised it to my lips.

Then, by degrees, like a child, without words, with imperceptible movements, she drew herself close to my side; she pressed there, palpitating and weeping, her face against my breast.

And I remained motionless, holding her body close to mine, our breaths mingling together, unconscious of the passage of time.

All at once she stirred. She removed herself from me, sitting upright upon the bed and uplifting with heartrending timidity her tear-stained face. Her lips quivered with a profound emotion, a sort of innocent and fearful wonder.

We gazed at one another. Her glance took on slowly a transparent, a heavenly intentness, as though she beheld a miracle. Suddenly her eyes shone resplendent. She emitted light, a celestial, quivering and astonished radiance. It seemed to me that I saw her for the first time in my life, and I beheld her with intoxication. Beneath that look her pure and ardent skin began to glow with an exquisite blush.

I took her hands; I leaned near her. We had no words. We were aware neither of the silence nor of the darkness which was commencing to grow light, nor of the twittering of birds awaking from their sleep. We realized only one another.

From time to time her breath wandered above my head. Then at last by a gentle pressure of her fingers she turned my face toward her; she bent over me, and demanded in a voice so low that it was audible only as a sigh:

"You love me, then?"

"Hush! You know it!"

Our lips met. A great and living joy sprang up in our hearts. I pressed her closer to me. But she freed herself. With a gesture feminine and angelic she raised her arms and began to undo with divinely troubled movements the coils of her hair. She smiled.

Outside, day was about to break in a clear and golden sky.

THE GHOST PAINTER

By LEONORA PRICE KIRK

LONG the road that leads from Santa Barbara, miles beyond the point on which the lighthouse stands, past the brown hills, splotched with purple sage, that stoop to meet the whispering sea, the great Lamont ranch spreads its expansive fields of grain. An olive avenue leads to a group of gaunt eucalyptus trees that stand guard before the gray stone arches of a mansion whose grim exterior looks as if it were designed by the mission fathers themselves. One expects to hear the chime of bells at vesper time, or to see the dark-robed monks kneel upon the stone pavement and with bowed heads and reverent lips count their beads.

But within the great polished hall one is surrounded by the refined luxuries of a fashionable world. Only, in a far upper corner that looks out over the sea is a little room where fashion never intrudes except in the form of visitors to the pleasant studio of a young lover of art. One sees many unusual things there; faces old and young, humble and proud look forth from the canvas, and each has been given the master stroke that tells the story, or tells that there is one untold.

Near the window through which the mellow light of the long afternoon had strayed, the young artist herself sat before an easel, her fair face grave with anxiety, her large brown eyes bent questioningly upon a new creation. There was no approval in the look with which she examined this, the most remarkable work she had ever done. Itha Lamont knew the picture was her best, yet she hated it.

She hated the two faces there which had haunted her since—she did not

know since when. That she must have seen those faces some time, somewhere, she felt certain, for, as far back as she could remember, they had been with her, and *one* had followed her persistently, pitilessly through the years; and when she learned that she had the power to put upon the canvas the dream people who had made her glad or unhappy, this gray-haired woman with the weary tragedy of her gaze, silently clamored for recognition.

"I don't want to paint you," the artist said. "You cannot make anyone happy. All my life you have made me sorrowful and afraid. Why should I give to the world that which has made me only miserable?"

But the ghost would not vanish, and one day, when all the summer world was calling to her in wholesome beauty, the artist took her brush in hand and began the picture at last.

And she talked to herself as she painted. "Am I insane? If I paint this specter of my brain, will it stay in its place on the canvas, or will it walk forth to dog my steps until I die? The canvas shall hold you," she said to the woman on the easel, "for I shall paint you as I see you. I shall tell the truth."

She could not know how prophetically she spoke. And the picture grew until it stood forth a living thing. When it was finished the girl gazed upon the work of her hand, and the burden of the years seemed to roll from her. Yet she was still unhappy. She had fought against painting that face. Had she proved a traitor to her conscience?

Itha turned from the easel with a smile that was but the perverse expression of a sigh. The half-open door was

thrown wide. On the threshold a visitor paused.

"Mother!" cried the girl.

Her smile was not counterfeit now.

"Dear me, Itha! You must not shut yourself up in this studio so much. It will tell on your health."

As she spoke, Mrs. Lamont laid a soft white hand on her daughter's arm. They were a strange contrast, those two. Itha, dark-eyed and slender, with a gentle melancholy that lent a dignity to her youth; her mother, fair and tall, with a vivacious *hauteur* that was but the refined expression of her vanity. The brilliant mother and the quiet, gifted daughter had little of common sympathy, and the girl had grown used to the pang of being misunderstood.

The artist girl smiled approval as her mother leaned upon the window ledge with buoyant grace and looked out over the reddening sea. Mrs. Lamont's posing had reached a state of perfection; she was unconscious that the ease of her motion was but the result of years of untiring practice.

"While you've been toiling at your easel, Itha, I've been out there," with a light motion of her hand toward the sun-dyed sea, "with a party of the cleverest people I've met this summer."

"I'm glad," murmured the girl as she pressed her mother's hand. "But I didn't have such cheerful company, mother; I was painting a dismal picture. It was Mr. Wentworth's yacht, was it not? I'm afraid I had forgotten until this minute."

"Just like you, you strange girl! Itha," and Mrs. Lamont's voice really held a note of anxiety, "why can't you enjoy life like other girls? You always look as if you were thinking of something in the far-off Nowhere that makes you unhappy."

Itha turned her face toward the sea to hide the quick tears that would tell how sensitive she was to one little rare touch of sympathy from the beautiful mother who did not understand.

"I'm sorry, mother," she answered, "but it is no fault of mine. I should like, too, to make you happy by marrying Mr. Wentworth, yet I cannot."

She spoke sadly, as if the finality of her remark had been dictated by the Fates themselves.

Mrs. Lamont's blue eyes sent her daughter a glance of proud disdain that bordered on contempt. "A man like Mr. Wentworth! Itha, he is one in a thousand. And you've given no reasons—"

"I know it," Itha responded heavily, and her dark eyes burned with the old bitter indignation at this sudden withdrawal of sympathy.

She had been weighted down with her own reserve long enough, she thought. Now she would speak frankly, though it hurt so much to tell the secret of her heart to this charming mother.

"I've not been frank, mother. There are two reasons why I can't marry the man you've chosen for me. One is that I don't love him, and the other is that there is someone else."

A startled look flashed into Mrs. Lamont's face.

"Someone else!" she murmured in low-voiced, musical anger.

The girl flushed deeply, yet she would not retreat.

"Yes," she replied with drooping eyelids. "It is Paul Delande."

The silence which followed this announcement was not what Itha had expected. She waited for more questions, for perhaps some keen observation which should cut like a two-edged sword. But the silence was all the answer given. Steeling her heart against whatever might come, she turned again to her mother.

On the window seat Mrs. Lamont was sitting upright, very white and motionless.

"Mother, mother!" cried the frightened girl.

"Itha," said Mrs. Lamont slowly, "you must not marry the man I dislike and distrust. It would kill me."

"But mother, dear, why do you distrust Paul?"

"He was my stepmother's only living relative—you know that."

"Yet he never once complained when he was disinherited. He might have easily contested the will, so I heard someone say."

Mrs. Lamont raised a slim white hand in protest. "Dr. Delande is shrewder than that. He's waited patiently all these years. He is trying to regain his lost fortune by winning you, Itha."

The girl had grown pale.

"Mother," she answered gently but firmly, "you wrong Paul. He is not trying to win me. He is going away."

Itha did not doubt the man she loved, but she looked hopelessly toward the future with its inevitable pain and loneliness.

Mrs. Lamont rose and lingered wearily, as if she had more to say but did not know how to say it. For the first time in her life this versatile woman was at a loss for words. She wandered aimlessly about the studio, trying to devise some tactful way of finding out how much Itha really cared for this hated step relative.

The next moment her gaze was arrested by the covered easel.

"Your new picture?" she queried in eager tones.

Itha was delighted at this unusual interest in her work. Yet she did not offer to uncover the painting.

"You would not like it, mother."

"Is it the one which the foreign critic praised so highly—the one he wishes exhibited in Paris?"

"Yes, Mr. Langdon has been very kind."

Mrs. Lamont's pretty hands rested in a light caress upon Itha's shoulders, and the taller woman bent upon her frail daughter a look in which pride was mingled with pity.

"Itha, he says great things of you. At Mrs. Trowbridge's reception, yesterday, he told me that he considered this picture a masterpiece."

A languor had fallen upon the spirit of the girl, and her mother's praise awoke no response. Reluctantly she threw back the cover. The newly finished picture stood before them in all its weird beauty and subtle power. And with those awful eyes of hers Itha's ghost woman searched the soul of the artist's mother. As Mrs. Lamont stared back, she leaned heavily against the wall.

"Oh, mother! I know it is a horrid picture. I hate the very sight of it! Come away."

The girl wound her slender arms about her mother's rigid form, but with sudden strength Mrs. Lamont threw her off and swayed toward the easel.

"O God, be merciful and take her back to the grave—bury her deep!" With the frenzy of the insane the woman turned on her child. "Was it not enough to love *him*? Yet you taunt me with *that!*"

Mrs. Lamont trembled perceptibly and sank in a limp heap upon the floor. Itha knelt beside her, calling, "Mother, mother," in gentle, soothing tones. Then she laid her down tenderly, brought water and bathed the deathlike face. Yet Mrs. Lamont gave no sign of life.

Shortly afterward servants answered the sharp ring of the bell, and the fainting woman was borne away to her own room. At the telephone the butler summoned Dr. Barnes.

But the young surgeon with the keen features and honest gray eyes who entered the wide hall half an hour later was not the family physician whom they had called from Santa Barbara. The servant led the way up the staircase to the door of the sickroom, which was opened by a young girl with a winsome, melancholy face.

"Paul!"

With frank joy she held out her hand. He took it in both his own, and looking into her dark eyes found his answer there.

"I was leaving for the station," he explained, "when Dr. Barnes telephoned that he could not come here because he must be in the operating room at this hour. There was no one else to send," he added apologetically.

Mrs. Lamont had regained consciousness, only to go into violent hysterics. "She has come up out of her grave! Bury her again!" she raved.

"Was there anything in the nature of a mental shock?" the physician asked.

"Yes," Itha replied with hesitation. "I had just finished a picture which—which is not a pleasant one. When mother saw it she fainted."

"Then it is that which she has on her mind. May I see the picture?"

The girl led the way through the dim-lit halls to the studio. Very slowly, and with a strange foreboding of evil, she uncovered the hateful canvas.

A flash of surprise banished the flush from his face. There was incredulity in the grave look he bent upon the scene which her brush had so weirdly wrought.

The background was an old-fashioned room in which an aged woman lay ill. Near her bedside stood a young woman with her face in the shadow. A middle-aged man sat at a table, pen in hand. There was nothing new or unusual in the grouping of these figures. That which embodied the mystery, which held the story about which the horror hung, was the face of the aged woman. The cry for help in those wide eyes stirred in all beholders both indignation and pity.

"Aunt Rachel!" muttered Paul Delande.

"I—I—beg your pardon!" stammered the astonished girl.

Wearily her hand swept her forehead. Would wonders never cease?

"Her very image—only *awful!*"

"But how can it be?" cried Itha. "I have no recollection of my step-grandmother. That face has haunted me for years. I don't know when it first came into mind."

His brows met. "Strange—strange! And this man—do you remember him?"

"That, too, is a mystery. I have a faint idea that I have seen him at some time, somewhere, yet no name comes to me. I can't imagine why I put him into the picture."

Dr. Delande spoke with slow, ironic bitterness. "His name is Crawford. He was once your mother's lawyer, though he has been dead a number of years."

The girl maintained a distressed silence.

"Why did you place the third person with her face turned from us?" he asked.

"Because no face came to me—none that would fit into this ghastly picture."

"It is all very strange. Why does Lawyer Crawford fit into the picture?"

That's a startling likeness of him as he was years ago."

"Can you tell me," pleaded Itha, "what the picture *does* mean? Am I a clairvoyant—or—or crazy?"

"You're an artist!" exclaimed Paul Delande with admiration. "The very atmosphere of suspense in this picture is wonderful. It is *alive!* You've caught the spirit—the horror—"

"Yes, the horror!"

Her hands locked, and into her dark eyes came a haunted look. "If only I knew what it means!"

He shook his head, puzzled. They were silent for a while; then he said gently: "Come, Miss Lamont, you've painted a morbid picture. You mustn't let it depress your spirits. I think your mother needs us."

And she was left alone at her mother's bedside at last, allowing no hand except her own to minister to the sufferer. To the girl who kept such desperate vigil, all the years of her life seemed packed into that fleeting present, and each moment flashed its merciless searchlight upon the mystery which had enshrouded the dream picture for so long.

Through the long night she watched on, until into her sweet face there stole a gray pallor, and her haunted eyes brooded jealously over the fever-ridden patient who babbled forth delirious confessions, and whom this girl-woman tried to soothe by the name of "mother."

With the lassitude of despair Itha gazed upon the ghost things that walked from out of the depths of her mother's delirium.

"You were there—in that room," the sick woman babbled on; "yes, *there*, you uncanny child, led by some supernatural power to witness my greed and cruelty. You were there, you ghost painter, you, asleep on the window seat, and we did not know it until you waked and called to me." The husky voice rose to a rasping whisper. "But whoever thought it possible that you were old enough to remember—that you were old enough to so much as have a memory? You were born old, you weird baby, you—you saw it all—and it was God who made you remember!"

In those night watches the mystery of the memory picture was gradually unfolded, and over and over the horror-bound girl listened to the story of her mother's crime. During the days that followed, when her mother was in her right mind, Itha hoped for a full and voluntary confession. But although remorse had fallen upon Mrs. Lamont with fierce and sudden attack, leaving her in a state of piteous dismay, she gave no sign of atonement.

Itha Lamont stood face to face with her conscience. All one night the struggle went on, until, exhausted, she sought a refuge in the twilight of the dawn. As she left the house, the cool gray darkness brushed against her cheek, and the sea called to her in hoarse monotone. She wandered to where a bold promontory jutted high above the water. Below, the waves moaned among the rocks and beat white fingers against the unyielding cliff.

As the grayness melted into the pallid forelight of the day, the colors of the sunrise scattered their reflections over the smooth floor of the sea—as delicate as the rose petals that fall with the breath of spring. Sinking down upon the ledge, the girl hid her face from the cold beauty of the dawn and sobbed with the sobbing of the sea, broken, incoherent prayers of a soul weary with the burden of a secret, the keeping of which would make her a partner of the crime.

He found her there in her abandonment of grief, unconscious of any human nearness, giving rein to her spirit in the lonely dawn. And thinking this but some reckless impulse of her moody temperament, he spoke in low tones of entreaty, as to an unreasonable child.

"Itha, you will kill yourself, here in the cold without a wrap. Your mother is rapidly recovering her strength, but you, poor child, are nervous and unstrung."

As she lifted her weird, dark eyes, they were like two souls that looked miserably forth from the white prison of her face, and gazing into their depths, Paul Delande ceased his chiding and stood in awed silence before her grief. Then he stooped and lifted her tenderly.

Very gently she evaded the caress as she answered him: "Paul, I have a confession to make. I know you'll keep the wretched secret sacred—"

She broke off, shuddering. He smoothed her hair with light, comforting strokes. But his heart was sorely troubled.

Itha went on with feverish haste: "You must take back what is yours—the—the money. Long ago there was a dreadful mistake."

"You're overwrought, dear. I've never regretted that your mother received my aunt's fortune. The greatest blessing of my life has been that I've had to work. Aunt Rachel made no mistake when she disinherited me."

"Paul, it wasn't your aunt's mistake. You were not disinherited."

Evidently she was fighting some hallucination. He remembered the strange coincidence of the picture, and feared for her reason. She read his fears.

"You perhaps think me mad. I am not." She plunged ahead, dragging him after, a reluctant listener. "The will—the right one—was burned in that fire that caught in the library. You remember? The other will was made later, when—when your aunt was not mentally responsible. She was led to believe that this last document was an exact copy of the one which had been accidentally destroyed. It was *not* a copy of the destroyed will which left everything to you. Just before her death she suspected that she had been deceived, and pleaded with them to let her see the will, but this was denied her."

After a long silence he asked her in a low tone: "How do you know this?"

"I didn't know that I knew until after I had painted that picture. I really witnessed that scene when I was a mere toddling baby. Yet it must have been burned upon my brain. I suppose it was what might be called a latent memory."

He looked toward the ocean, and she did not see that he was pale.

"There was *one* face in that picture you could not paint," he said at last.

"Ah, but I could now!" The girl covered her eyes with her hands. "O, God! Mother, mother!"

Stunned, horrified at the abyss of misery into which she had been flung, no comforting phrases came to him. They stood, these sorrowful lovers, hand in hand beside the open grave of an arisen crime. And Itha had made her confession, not for selfish love of him—though he knew that she loved him—but for the uncompromising conscience which had driven her into the shadow of the valley of humiliation.

"There is only one way that you can help us," she told him. "Help me to save her—by—by taking all the wretched money back."

"There is only one thing in all this world which I can take from her—yourself."

"Paul—Paul—"

Her spirit was crushed, her pride shattered.

"I love you," murmured Paul Delande as he threw his gauntlet in the face of fate and drew her to him.

Suddenly, upon the calm that lay on land and sea, fell the harsh notes of a frightened halloo.

"It's Anita!" whispered Itha.

Their eyes met in a glance of apprehension.

The maid came running toward them across the terrace. "She's left her room—I can't find her!" she cried breathlessly.

"Anita," Itha reasoned—"she was asleep when I came out here. Did you look about the house?"

The maid nodded. "She rang for me, then told me to bring her blue morning gown, that she was tired of staying in bed. I brought the gown, and seeing that she looked so white and weak, I went for a cup of coffee. When I returned she was gone."

Hurrying into the house, they began the search. Mrs. Lamont's room was empty. The flight of his patient filled Dr. Delande with anxiety.

But Itha's face brightened. "The studio!" she suggested.

When they opened the door of the studio the intruders drew back, abashed at what they saw there.

Mrs. Lamont was kneeling before the haunted picture. Her blue morning robe

hung in soft folds from the drooping shoulders to the floor. Through the window that overlooked the sea the light fell slantwise and rested as if in blessing upon the bowed head. That clear radiance encircled the fair coiffure like an aureole. She seemed some saintly worshiper at a shrine. But the face of the woman on the easel denied it. No blessing shone from those wide eyes in which terror and despair fought to master death. Thus the dead gazed back at the living, and the living whispered broken phrases to the dead.

Itha's half-smothered sob broke the spell of this strange communion. Like one startled out of a dream, her mother turned a wan face toward the doorway. A moment's silence, then Mrs. Lamont rose unsteadily.

"Itha—Paul—"

In an instant they were at her side. The man's strong arm supported the trembling form.

"Let's go back to your room, mother," Itha coaxed. "It's chilly here."

Mrs. Lamont shivered. "As cold as death, Itha."

"Come, mother!"

Mrs. Lamont drew away from them with something of her old disdain. "No. I wish to tell you while *she* is in the room," with a glance toward the easel.

"Then we'll have a fire," said Dr. Delande in his most practical tones.

He knelt upon the hearth and stirred to life the sleeping embers there. And as the flames cheerily caught the fresh logs which he piled across the big black andirons, the ruddy light threw into bold relief his stalwart form and the rugged kindness of his face. The man's strength brought out sharply the frailty of the woman worn by illness.

"Mother," said Itha compassionately, "isn't it good to have Paul with us? He will stay—always."

A cynical smile quivered a moment upon Mrs. Lamont's lips. "Not after he has heard what I have to say, Itha."

Paul Delande rose to his full height and looked down at them with gentle reproach.

Mrs. Lamont faced him in proud pen-

itence. "I have stolen your birthright, Paul. I've squandered your fortune. Your marriage with my daughter cannot restore your lost inheritance to you."

The man's voice thrilled with a deep happiness as he answered her: "Love is a birthright which no one can take from us."

Into Itha's face there came a new content.

"Mother, can it be true? We are poor?"

"Itha, there are debts to pay."

"I'll pay the debts, mother."

Mrs. Lamont turned toward the easel. "*She* will bring you the homage of the world. It's a miracle—that resurrection. The dead has spoken through the genius of the living."

Itha lifted the picture and held it at arm's length.

"Let her rest in quiet," she solemnly said.

Then with a quick movement she threw the painting into the flames. Mrs. Lamont sank upon the hearth. She thrust her white jeweled hands into the fierce heat, but Paul Delande caught them and imprisoned them in his own.

The mother's piteous cry rang out.

"Itha—your masterpiece!"

But Itha laid her cheek against her mother's shoulder, as in those far-away days of childish faith and adoration.

A long green tongue of flame shot up the black throat of the chimney and threw a lurid light over the kneeling figures. Mrs. Lamont shuddered. Itha held her closely.

"She shall haunt us no more," the girl whispered.

The long flame reddened, and, curling, bent to its task. The eyes of the dead woman gazed out at them in wild entreaty. It was as if some martyr were being burned at the stake. A moment later the picture lay in ruins. Faintly, like a requiem for the passing soul, upon the still air floated the far-off chimes from Santa Barbara Mission.

And there on the hearth rug, in that effulgent glow, Mrs. Lamont looked spent and old. Beside her knelt the other watchers, a radiance not reflected from the burning embers on their young faces.



THE LITTLE CANDLES

By LOUISE FOWLER GIGNOUX

OH, tell me, fellow traveler—
You've journeyed night and day—
Have you the little candles seen
That burn along the way?
They are the myriad lights of hope,
Some lit for you, perhaps for me,
And by their light we keep the path,
Though not our own they be.
And have you seen mine anywhere,
Too far ahead for me to see?
Oh, tell me—in some far-off land
Has one been lit for me?

LIFE'S INN

By MARTHA HASKELL CLARK

THE Wide World stands a-welcoming beside the sunny way,
For page and squire and knight and dame to halt and ride away;
And crimson sweet the roses flamed that lay upon my breast,
When all the world was but an inn, and I a welcome guest.

The knights were lion-hearted and their ladies lily fair;
The silver armor glittered bright upon the roadway there,
When each far distant turning held the promise of a quest,
And all the world was but an inn, and I a welcome guest.

No knock was there of Misery nor step of grimy Toil;
But bold Adventure raised the latch, his palfrey heaped with spoil,
While Romance flew to hold his rein and wait on his behest,
When all the world was but an inn, and I a welcome guest.

And what care I that youth must fade, and love locks turn to gray?
Forsooth, at every inn there lies some reckoning to pay!
I've warmed my heart beside their fire, partaken of their best,
When all the world was but an inn, and I a welcome guest.

So why should I complain and curse in spiteful accents shrill
Because another draws his rein, my wonted place to fill?
But ere Old Age the taper takes, to light me to my rest,
I'll draw his chair and drink his health, and make him welcome guest.



WHEN there is the devil to pay the price is not considered.



DISTANCE lends enchantment but propinquity gets the man.

FROM FRYING PAN TO FIRE

By ROY MELBOURNE CHALMERS

BEFORE saying anything about the curious affair I wish it noted that I, Brayley Jones, am by nature more of a gullible than a suspicious man. Suspicion with me is always slowly conceived; it comes to me at the eleventh hour. It is the eleventh hour now. I am to be married at the twelfth—that is, tomorrow, on Hersey's lawn at Idlewilde.

Never having been married before, I feel nervous. My cheek is pale; my feet are cold. I am restless and would like to run around the block, only that would never do; somebody would think I was trying to run away and would stop me. I do not want to run away now because I am reconciled to my fate; but I did that Marchy night when Stephen Hersey, abetted by his man-eating beast, interviewed me in his library. I am writing this in the hope that it may meet his eyes some day. I shall *cache* it in my safe-deposit box tomorrow morning and he can read it after I am dead—providing he does not die first, of course. If I thought he was liable to do that I would take my manuscript and read it to him now.

This is what happened that Marchy night.

When I got off the train the moon was full and cold; the wind was hoarse in the eaves of the station; it whirled gustily in the road. Backed up to the platform I found a champing pair attached to a shiny depot bus. A respectful flunkie wearing seal-brown livery with brass buttons, an opera hat and fawn-colored leggings stepped forward.

"Mr. Jones?" he asked, touching the opera hat. "This is the Herseys' bus,

sir." I remembered that once, in some confusion, a coachman had said, "This is the Bussys' hearse," which was natural, considering that they put you in at the back.

A brisk drive of ten minutes over hard macadam, a Georgian gate—anyway, they kept a lodge keeper there and his name was George—then lights through the leafless park trees from the silent house. And all the while the words of her telegram kept running through my mind: "Come at once. I want to see you. H. Hersey."

The fact that I had taken the first train goes to show that on the spur of the moment I had not been suspicious. But what did it mean? Surely that Helen was alone. I wanted to reassure myself by inquiring of the coachman if Hersey was away, but reason told me that this would sound peculiar. Whether her husband was away or not, it was indiscreet of Helen. She never had sent for me before. It was both flattering and disquieting.

It was so disquieting that when my hat blew off as I alighted from the bus under the *porte-cochere* I tried to intercept the united efforts of Hersey's coachman and butler to recover it. Somehow I disliked to give my hat up—I felt I might need it. As it was, the butler kept it. On looking back I can see how a really suspicious person would have discovered a meaning even in that. He took my coat, too.

"You are to go into the library, sir," he said, as I lingered a moment before a mirror to smooth my wind-disheveled tresses. My hair is cinnamon. Some people call it red, but they are wrong. This is a bit of local color.

A fire crackled brightly in the square hall; before it, jowl on paws, a powerful Great Dane fixed me speculatively with one eye as I followed the butler through.

"Mr. Jones, sir," announced the man at the library door, and the "sir" came like a sudden dig in the ribs. A moment later I found myself in the presence of—Stephen Hersey! No Helen—only Stephen, grilling his back legs at another crackling blaze.

One saw in him a solidly built, smooth shaven man of forty-five, with rather a sly, pointed countenance. He gave me a formal hand, a sort of benefit-of-the-doubt shake, thought I.

"Sit down," he said; he appeared to be keyed up for something. I sat down near the door. He took a swivel chair behind a mahogany table desk several feet away.

"It was my idea, sending the telegram," he began, fingering a heavy brass paper weight. "No doubt you are surprised."

"I am, and I am not," I replied non-committally.

"Just so," said he, essaying a knowing smile. This gave me my cue. I decided to be as vague as possible. I would take the stand of innocence until proven guilty. Exactly what he believed me guilty of I was curious to know.

"May I ask how long this has been going on?" he asked.

"Not so very long," I told him.

"What do you mean by that?" his small, freckle-colored eyes peered from under the hanging lamp of clustered grape leaves.

"Well," I temporized, "it might have been a good deal longer."

"Just so," he said, and I decided that the expression was a habit with him. "And you really love her, do you?" asked he.

"That," I said after a pause, "is an embarrassing question to answer."

"Don't you suppose it's an embarrassing one to put?" His tone was one of constrained protest. "I sent for you expressly for the purpose of talking this over, greatly as I disliked to take such a step. Be good enough to answer."

"I will not answer such a question," I said, folding my arms.

"Just so," said Stephen Hersey again drily. "But your reticence practically amounts to an admission. I am going to prove it, anyhow." He fell back in his chair and cogitated. I wondered where Helen was—if she were listening. No sound within but the snap of burning wood; outside, the worrying wind.

"Don't mistake my temperamental mildness for lack of emotion," he resumed. "Some men with my provocation would be beside themselves. But I feel my grievance no less deeply, understand. I am anything but a happy man."

"I am not happy myself," I said.

"You ought to be!" he flared, showing anger for the first time. "You've had things pretty much your own way—you and she; but it's not going to be so any longer, I promise you that!" He planted a brown, solid-looking fist on the desk and leaned forward. "I'm none of the good-natured fool you took me for," he continued, ugly in tone. "I said I was mild, but I'm not to be trifled with. I don't know just how you and I will settle this, but, by heaven, it's got to be settled in some way!"

"I don't like your tone," said I, rising, "and I don't care to stay here unless—"

Stephen Hersey was on his feet and a low whistle escaped his lips. I heard a sudden scrambling movement in the hall, then the soft, quick pad of paws as the Great Dane came into the library.

"It's a good dog," said Stephen sardonically, "or should I say a bad dog, but a very well-trained dog? I wouldn't try to go just now if I were you, Mr. Jones."

"I'm not going to," I answered, as the beast, at his bidding, sprawled in the doorway. "The company is so much improved that I shall be glad to stay."

"You are the company," he grinned insinuatingly.

I gave my shoulders a hunch. "You have me at a disadvantage."

"You had me there quite a while."

"I don't know just how far your im-

agation has led you," said I. "You speak of settling—"

The swivel chair squealed as he lurched forward. "Yes," he broke in. "Tonight!"

"Then do me the favor to say what you *think* you know," I said. And Stephen did so without further delay.

He opened a drawer and produced what I had secretly feared had betrayed me—a packet of letters—my letters! But the envelopes were gone; that, I believed, was what had left him in doubt as to the duration of the affair, the letters themselves being undated.

"There!" he said, throwing them on the desk. "There is my proof. Is it enough?"

I said nothing as I faced his accusing sneer. I was thinking. It gave me little satisfaction to remember that, although I had made it a point never to refer by name or pronoun to Stephen Hersey in their pages, the letters were rather ardently expressed; they had a "God bless thee, love; it was not so to be" tone, a "How badly is the course of life adjusted, that where sweet roses bloom sharp thorns abound" way of slinging invisible mud at one misfit husband. Helen should have destroyed the letters, for all their purely expressed sentiment.

Neither of us spoke. I looked at Stephen, then at the watchful dog. When my eyes returned to the man his elbows were on the desk and his face in his hands. I suddenly felt sorry for him, ashamed of myself, unspeakably embarrassed and ill at ease. I was wondering what would happen next, when Helen appeared at a door in the far end of the library.

I saw consternation in her beautiful face; my own look and Stephen's dejection were enough. To my surprise she swept into the room to where he sat.

"Stephen," she said in a low, faltering voice, and I saw the hand which went to her throat tremble, "why is Mr. Jones here tonight?" Then for the first time she appeared to notice the letters, and started ever so slightly; the green lamp shade made her look very pale.

"I sent for him," he answered bitterly, touching the letters as if they stung, "to tell him that I knew, and that I wanted a man's satisfaction. He has been writing these letters to his 'Dearest Helen' for a longer time than he will admit. I've read every word of them, and it is very plain to me that his 'Dearest Helen' cares more for him than—than she does for me. He comes into my home like a thief in the night and robs me of all that I hold dear in life. And because that one thing means more to me than—life, I intend to deal with him myself!" He opened the drawer with a fascinating deliberation, never taking his ferrety eyes from me. My blood turned to ice as I sat watching his movements, for I thought I knew what was in the drawer. But before I could see what was there a voice stayed his hand—the voice of his daughter Helen from the doorway at my right.

"Have you all gone crazy?" she demanded between a sob and a laugh as she entered the room. "Mother, why don't you speak? And you, Brayley, have your senses entirely left you?" She turned from me and went over to her father. "Papa, how *could* you believe such a thing?" Stephen was staring at her in blank bewilderment, his hand still in the drawer. His daughter placed an arm around his neck, and with her other hand picked up the little bundle of letters. "They're mine, you dear old stupid," she explained, "every one of them."

"Yours!" he exclaimed in a low, incredulous tone. "Then what were they doing in your mother's desk?"

"I don't know." She looked up at her mother in surprise. "I—I missed them."

"I took them," confessed Mrs. Hersey, eyes averted from her daughter, "because I thought it right for me to—to exercise a mother's judgment. I took them this afternoon to read. I thought it was Helen you were discussing."

"And you," said Stephen to me with a cynical smile of disbelief—his hand was still in the drawer—"I suppose *you* will find it convenient to agree to all this

—although you listened for ten minutes to things that an innocent man wouldn't have been apt to stand for."

When a daughter was willing to shield her mother, and the mother willing to escape through the loophole offered, it was not for me to confute them. But be it understood that I played my part for the sake of Stephen's wife, not for myself. It was a mighty convenient subterfuge, all the same.

"I did not understand until a moment ago the real meaning of my strange treatment," I replied, assuming without much difficulty an air of injury. "I supposed you had, or thought you had, grounds for objecting to me as a—well, a friend of your daughter Helen's. You never once tonight have referred directly to your wife, sir. And wouldn't an innocent man be likely to stand a lot of abuse with a beast ready to spring at his throat if he moved a hand?"

Stephen studied me keenly for several moments. Suddenly he closed the drawer and I breathed freely once more.

"If I am to believe that these letters are addressed to my daughter," he said, placing the chip on his other shoulder, as it were, "I would like you to explain their tone. They lack sincerity. You profess to care for her, and yet you imply that marriage is out of the question. My daughter's happiness," added Stephen roughly, "I place before my own, sir!"

I looked at Helen—both Helens. The daughter was as plain as her mother was beautiful—woefully, hopelessly unattractive. In the interval they hung upon my answer. I had to live up to my part. Everything depended upon it.

"There was an obstacle," I said, smiling mysteriously.

"What obstacle?" he demanded.

"You," I said. "I was led to believe that I could not marry Helen" (but I did not say which Helen) "on your account—that you would never consent to such an arrangement."

"Who told you that?"

"Helen."

Stephen turned to his daughter. "Is that so?"

"Yes," answered her mother before

she could speak. "It was I who told him so."

Hersey dropped into his chair, his gaze fixed on her in amazement. Then he turned slowly to me. "I was not aware, Mr. Jones," he told me more frankly than flatteringly, "that I had ever expressed an opinion about you in words, no matter what I may have thought. I'm very sorry for the miserable mess I've made of things tonight, and I shall, of course, be glad to make any restitution in my power. I think we understand one another, don't we?"

I did not answer; knowing what he meant, I did not dare.

"In other words," he went on rather wearily but with parental broad-mindedness, "if you care to marry my daughter—and I assume that you do, don't you?" he broke off abruptly.

"I should be delighted," I answered lamely, helplessly, my eyes meeting hers with a message that she could not fail to read. How utterly plain and sallow and unlovely of form appeared the girl of twenty beside the mother of forty! "It's up to your daughter," I added.

"No," she answered promptly with amused unconcern, "I don't believe I care to."

My pulses skipped out of sheer relief, for somehow I had been a little anxious; my face, I regret to say, reflected my thought. But Stephen, in his surprise, was staring at Helen and did not see. She noticed my pleased expression, however. So did her silent mother.

I would not stay then, in spite of Hersey's sympathetic attempts to detain me. Had I not been rejected, jilted before his eyes? I started gloomily on foot for the train.

Ere I had gone a hundred feet I heard him calling my name and running after me.

"Don't go, Mr. Jones," he said breathlessly. "My daughter has changed her mind!" And I—I tottered back to my doom.

I found her standing before the hall fire. Stephen gave me a congratulatory clap on the shoulder and left us alone, face to face. She had been crying.

"You had a narrow escape tonight,"

she said, tremulous but determined. "When I was a child my father shot a man for—making love to my mother. I saved you, not for your sake, but for hers. God made me as ugly as sin"—clenching her thin hands passionately—"and I have grown up to expect that no man would ever ask me to marry him. You—you were horrified at the very thought—you didn't spare *me*—and when I saw how glad you were to get out of it I decided to change my mind and—punish you!"

On these counts, Stephen Hersey, do I base my suspicions:

The easy way in which you were con-

vinced that the letters were not your wife's. The conveniently discarded envelopes showing to whom the letters were written. Your crafty personality. My knowledge that you had lost heavily on the stock market. *Your* knowledge that my father had left me five millions!

Why do I submit and go to the altar like a calf for slaughter? *Not* because of what I saw in your desk drawer one other night when you left it open purposely for me to see, nor because I have ascertained that you did once shoot a man on similar provocation, but because, aside from all this, I am sincerely sorry that I hurt your daughter's feelings—and I am going to make good.



SINGLETON—Do you believe in the old adage about marrying in haste and repenting at leisure?

WEDDERLY—No, I don't. After a man marries he has no leisure.



BRown—What have you got against that man Smith? He has done several good things.

JONES—Yes, but I happened to be one of them.



HUSBAND—You never kiss me except when you want money.

WIFE—Well, isn't that often enough?



PESSIMISM is the wraith of lost illusions.

MATRIMONY

By TERRELL LOVE HOLLIDAY

MATRIMONY is the joint stock company which a minister promoteth as a side line and a lawyer throweth into bankruptcy with the feminine stockholder as the preferred creditor.

It is the boot which induceth a girl to swap a hundred-dollar salary for a forty-dollar man. 'Tis a neckyoke which maketh two collars to chafe as one.

Matrimony is ascribed to softening of the brain or heart, or purse itch. Exactly what causeth it the Lord only knoweth, but time will tell—when it is too late.

By matrimony the Optimist expecteth to get a silent partner who feareth not the cook nor staying alone at night. The Pessimist hopeth only to dodge the Suffragette when he maketh his choice, and to escape with light alimony.

The benefits of matrimony are many (saith the promoter). For mending broken nobility it is without a rival. Through it a man acquireth a good cook and housekeeper—sometimes. And a woman obtaineth a meal ticket—occasionally. And when she doth, although issued for life, she frequently loseth it before it expireth.

Matrimony resulteth variously—in happiness, trouble or even children. The latter, though the least frequent, seem to be the most dreaded.

Is matrimony a failure? The neighbor on thy right hand saith, "Yea, it is hell," and the one on thy left, "Nay, it is heaven." And verily, both are wrong—it is earth.

In the Blessed Realm there is no marrying nor giving up alimony. Angels, being wise, are prudently fearful. Wherefore, only by rushing in and investigating for ourselves can we learn what matrimony hath in store for us.

Brethren, let us take a chance.



THE MASQUE

By ALOYSIUS COLL

MEN are as old as the wisdom they teach
Or young as the follies they play;
But who can tell when the owl shall preach,
 Or the ass begin to bray?
For all of us know that tomorrow's fool
 Is the Solomon of today!

HIS PEOPLE

By THOMAS SAMSON MILLER

"YOU will go down to your people," she had said, with a hint of questioning and an intonation and glance that took the remark out of the commonplace. He knew what she meant, what she invited. At least, he thought he knew. But he could not respond to her confidence. To her world "people" spelled everything; he dared not betray his background. And yet, for the romance to fizzle out thus—the romance of that promenade deck—their exquisite attunement—those days of sunlit seas and taffrail gazing—those wonderful hours in the narrow byways of ports of call and those starry nights over the phosphorescent wake welded body and body, soul and soul; then had his oneness slipped from him—his antagonism to humankind—that wretched heritage of his strange childhood—dissipated. True, in Africa his quiet sincerity and self-made position had buried all question of "his people." And on the passage home kind had taken to kind in that naturalness of shipboard where arbitrary distinctions of caste are temporarily lost in the urgency of kill-time companionship. Almost he had forgotten there was question, only suddenly to rediscover it where he had learned to dread it most. He had nursed an undefined hope that, being American, she had truer values—founded on personality rather than on the accidental standards of birth. Perhaps, he thought bitterly, if he had taken her at one of those rare moments when their souls had flown together, had then told her the story of his lost childhood, she would have swept it all away as immaterial, would have softened—such sympathy as hers made

all happinesses possible. Ah, but no; he would have it as clear as day—she must take him for himself, with full understanding of his—he dared not think the word. What would he say now? He had to say something, and that quickly. Already her baggage was ashore and her matronly mother appealing to her from the head of the gangway. But he never was a ready man—rather given to slow and correct thinking, a trait deepened by African solitudes. She seemed loth to part thus—perhaps she, too, was hoping. But her mother was calling imperatively:

"Rose—Rosie! Do hurry."

She held out her hand. He retained it unconsciously. There was a little quaver in her voice:

"Th—then it is good - bye, Mr. Dixon?"

"I—I hope not, Miss Pillsbury."

"Mamma and I expect to be in London a fortnight; we are booked at the Cecil."

It was obviously an extension of her mercy. He bowed over the little gloved hand. "Then I may pay my respects?"

Here her mother descended on her and gracelessly hurried her away.

Dixon followed his own luggage through the customs and checked it to the baggage room, until he had decided on his movements. He was as one stranded—no claims, no trunks of presents, no expectancy of telegraphic messenger or the hundred sentiments of the average home arrival, only a thought to be in her town. He drifted out of the docks and stood hesitating on the curb. A touting cabby drew up. "Hansom, sir?"

A voice at Dixon's elbow asked: "Are you taking the cab, Dixon?"

He turned to see a tall figure in military khaki. "No, Major."

The officer put his foot on the step, but was arrested by an atmosphere of depression in the other.

"Falls a bit flat, eh?" he commented. "It's always like that. Out in the sun and among the niggers we dream of the streets—the life, lights, chatter, the shops; we get to idealizing white women until we are crazy to come home"—he broke off as a painted woman in slatternly skirt and trailing plume impudently reeled up to them—"only to meet that," he finished. "Well, you will feel better when you get down to your people." He sprang into his handsome and was quickly lost in the traffic.

Dixon plunged on blindly. His "people" again. The phrase was an obsession; it soothed through his head, annotating the roar of the sweeping traffic which beat into a brain accustomed and attuned to nature's breathing solitudes confusingly, terrifyingly. Sometimes the endless shop windows and thin, worrying faces faded filmily into the familiar perspectives of still growing palms patterned against turquoise skies and the broad, glistening, snaky Niger with its slow crawling canoes. Or her low, rich voice came quietly and comfortingly, lifting him momentarily into the infinite, only to be rudely jostled back to the mean and finite by elbowing shoulders of scurrying shop clerks. For years he had been one above—a king of his colored world—judge, counselor, priest; now he was a lost unit in six millions. A deep, despairing wretchedness gripped him—a physical and psychical sickness—a stifling sense of nothingness—a feeling as of being shut in a madhouse, and a homesickness for the slow, measured stride of African simplicity. Suddenly came the resolve to get away to the oaks and dreaming pastures of his infancy. Came the thought, almost Satanic: "Go down to your people." He hailed a cab and whirled rapidly to the South Western station and booked first class to Framley; the clerk had to run his finger down a long schedule to find the fare.

He sank back into the corner of his carriage and moodily regarded the flying smoky tenements and factories, until they thinned out into dismal suburbs, which soon gave place to rolling hill and dale sprinkled with drowsy villages and squat Norman churches; his spirits lightened a trifle, approximating to the soft twilight, and then lapsing tiredly into the darkness that merged the land into shadowy shapes. He was aroused by the harsh grinding of brakes and a lusty yelling: "Framley—Framley, for Little Framley."

Two porters fought at his door for the remunerative privilege of attending the only alighting first-class passenger. Dixon had forgotten his luggage, but it mattered little; he was used to going light. The porters made their own deductions—deductions derogatory to Dixon's claims to the title of gentleman, until he tipped one to help a woman struggling from a third-class coach with many parcels and small children.

He passed on down the dimly lighted platform, walking now briskly, as if the goal was definite, and taking interest in his surroundings. He noticed limp bunting and dry crisping evergreens garlanding lamp-post and arch, and over the exit a faded floral "Welcome." He questioned the station master:

"A wedding?"

"No, sir. The baronet came home yesterday."

"Sir George been abroad?"

"Sir George is dead, sir." The station master failed to see Dixon's start; he continued placidly: "Master Charles—he who was ranching in California—succeeds to the title. He came home the day before yesterday, and brought his wife. She's American. We look for livelier times now there's a 'my lady' at the Hall."

"Dead!" Dixon reiterated with a shocked gasp.

"Yes—hunting accident—that's if you *can* call it an accident, when you ride at any and everything like the devil! They do say that he courted death, but—" He paused discreetly as he recalled that he knew nothing of the stranger's identity. Then, as Dixon

made no comment, he asked: "Do you want a fly, sir?"

Dixon woke out of his reverie. "No—no, thanks; I'll walk."

"Going far, sir?"

"Little Framley. Good night."

"Good night, sir."

He struck across the quaint village square and out onto a road walled in and roofed by full-foliaged chestnuts—how often had his childish fears been aroused by the whispering ghosts in their leaves on those tragic nights when he escaped his home and vulgar scolding mother to ask of God never answered questions! The avenue was the planting of Sir George Framley, the fifth baronet. The park and farm land all around were the feudal spoils of the first robber knight, whose bones were boastfully mausoleumed under the spire that pierced the stars above Little Framley. The hamlet itself was peopled by the Hall's pensioned servants and senile laborers. Dixon's thoughts persisted in critical strain of the Hall, seeing the blight of its selfishness, philanthropy and playful religion. At times he found himself hating the Framley name with a ferociousness that seemed an alien madness. Then he entered the low-roofed, gabled village, just as eight o'clock chimed solemnly, sonorously from the spire, bringing a thousand tense and passionate reminiscences. He crossed the triangular green to a tumble-down inn with a swinging sign, "Ye Boar's Head." At the door he stayed a moment, as if bracing himself to an ordeal, then resolutely entered a low-ceiled taproom reeking with stale beer and tobacco and noisy with ribald singsong.

A hoydenish blond wench paused in the act of drawing ale to look up with her business smile.

Dixon went up to the bar and held across his hand.

"You must be Lizzie. Don't you recall me?"

The girl's smile froze into a frightened stare. She dropped her pewter mug on the counter with a bang and ran to a small curtained window in a door behind the bar, calling in a panic, "Mother! Mother!"

December, 1910—5

A fleshy woman entered with rustle of stiff black silk and a jangle of showy jewelry. Her eyes met Dixon's with a start. Her indolently good-natured face soured evilly. She raised a flap in the counter and beckoned him with a flabby overringed hand into a stuffy, spirit-reeking parlor. An enormously fat man got drowsily, laboriously out of an armchair and shuffled out of the room with fearful sidelong glances at Dixon.

The woman flopped into a companion armchair. Dixon drew up a cane seat. "Well, mother, can't you pretend to be glad to see me?" He tried to coax pleasantry into his voice.

"My God! What 'ave you come 'ome for?" She wiped her mouth with the back of her hand and pushed up her heavy false fringe, irritating, unthought gestures of habit that conjured up all the old disgust and antagonism that had robbed his youth of love. "You've got no call to drop onto us like this—nary a telegram—a-frightening of us." She whimpered and shifted uneasily under his unconscious penetration.

He woke to the fact that he was antagonizing her.

"I did not mean to frighten you—mother." The maternal address came limply, accentuating the subtle sense of hostility he was trying to persuade away. "What is there to be frightened about?"

"You know very well what the talk was; and here you come home, and him only just dead." She reached out to the decanter, but he caught and stayed her hand.

"Not now. I don't mean to be domineering"—he anticipated the old complaint—"but the time has come when I must know how much of what they said was true. What did you mean by, 'And him just dead'? Why should his death affect you or me, unless—unless that gossip was true?"

She would have lied had she the wit to invent—he saw that; it was his curse to know his mother through and through. She fumbled in her skirts for her handkerchief, then dabbed tearless eyes.

"There you go, a-reflectin' on your own mother. You never did have no natural affection—was always willful

and "igh-minded. Where you got your 'igh ideas, God knows—you didn't get them from me; I thank God I was always 'umble-minded and knowed my station."

He leaned forward, burning his eyes into hers: "It—may—be—that—I—got—their from *him*?"

She looked at him stupidly, shocked by the bold affront of his question; then she took refuge behind her handkerchief.

He waited coldly, unsympathetically, hating himself for his unfeelingness, and vividly conscious of her buffoon attempt to gain time. She exhausted his patience.

"If you won't tell me, I shall go up to the Hall."

She sat up in quick alarm. "My God, d'ye want to ruin me?"

"Ruin! I don't understand. If it is money, I—"

She caught him up.

"Oh, you have money a-plenty—I read in the paper what you give to the orphan home! But you never had none to spare for your own kith and kin."

"Mother," exasperatedly, "we have been over all that before. I will not give anything to make village sots of your sons, but if they will strike out—America, Australia—"

"My sons!" she shrilly interrupted. "Ain't they your brothers?"

"That is what I am asking you." Suddenly he dropped his tone to one of persuasion. He laid his hand on her arm. "Mother, can't you, just this once, tell me? I want to know—I must know! My very life—the only life I care for—depends on it."

His appeal seemed to her a weakening on his part, strengthening her opposition.

"It all comes o' educatin' you different from the others; I always told him it was a mistake a-sendin' you to a gentleman's school."

"Then he did educate me!" He seized on the admission. "You always denied it. Why should he educate me, if—if what they say is not true?"

Her face slowly purpled before his steady eyes. Used to ruling her world

by heavy bullying backed by control of the family finances, she now found herself beaten by superior personality. She fell into termagant rage.

"That's it, accuse the mother as gave you suck! Call her to her face—"

He escaped—out through the bar, out into the village and the clean night. What a mean, sordid fatality bound him—barriered all that was cultured, intellectual, refined—all the life he hungered for! Here he was, after years of fighting, just where he was as a child, the Hall on one side closed to him, the village—its senility, coarseness, its dwarfed, dull, plodding life open but abhorrent. The taproom singsong followed him as his feet carried him of their own volition toward the Hall, along the way he used as a child to creep down to see the "gentry"—to see soft, intellectual faces, hear modulated voices, and dream of purity, soul, honor. The tiered windows in soft glow shone through the oaks like the fairy palace it had always been. It housed art, conversation, laughter, personalities, sympathy. It had housed *him*—who had been his heroic ideal of manhood—his youth's Launcelot—the "young Cap'n" who had always stayed to lay a kind hand on the child's head and look so into his eyes. How his heart had gone out to him! He broke from the main road to a path which led, as he well knew, to a terraced garden where he might peep his full from behind a privet hedge. Some event was on tonight. The Hall front was ablaze, whitening spectrally statue and shrubbery. Automobiles and lumbering family barouches rolled swiftly, silently to the columned façade and deposited fluffy womenkind and groomed men into the ranks of an army of powdered footmen. He saw it all with an outcast's jealousy, and a silent prayer that he might be rid of his taint—that he might on equitable grounds claim *her*—the girl who had reawakened all this old pain. Then his attention was taken by a querulous voice from a group of villagers collected on the other side of the hedge.

"I reckon as how the American woman didn't cry hard when Sir George broke his neck; it be some'at as doesn't

come every day to be called from a farm to be 'my lady.'"

A gruff voice slashed in contemptuously: "'My lady'! There's some as thinks as if a certain young man had his rights he would be a-sitting where Sir Charles is."

An ironical laugh greeted the remark. "Here's Jim Beasley setting up the bastard to be lord over us," said one.

Dixon stood suddenly erect, sweeping his sleeve across his eyes, as if warding a blow. The word struck him brutally, sickening his whole being, sweeping away his dreams and dropping him into a stale, wretched world—a nightmare of emptiness. He was a proud man, coveting honor more than life; and here he was revealed as despised of yokels. He reeled away from the hedge, but was again arrested by Beasley's voice.

"And I could put him there had I a mind to. I knows what I knows," he boasted thickly.

"Aw, stow your clap! You're always gassing what yer knows when you've had a few glasses."

Beasley was taunted into indiscretion. "I tell you, I knows what I knows. I was ostler to the Blue Dolphin, up to Burlingham, when Sir George, or Cap'n George he then was, come with Mary Dixon—Mary Wright then; she was maid at the Hall—come for a room. I carried his bag from the station."

Another ironical laugh greeted his momentous information. It angered him and he stumped away.

Dixon was about to follow and intercept the man, when a third spoke, and he was caught by the man's seriousness.

"You chaps laugh, but d'ye mind as Beasley was always able to get what he wanted out of the old Baronet when you or me couldn't get a bit o' paint or a tile to our cottages? I tell you, I seen something myself what opened my eyes. I was carrying the Cap'n's guns one day—we was down to the bottom covert after pheasants—when we run plump into the boy—he jumped out o' a hedge with a wooden sword in his hand a-chasing o' an imaginary Russian. The Cap'n was just home from India, and hadn't set eyes on the kid. He stops

the youngster and says: 'Do you know you are trespassing, my boy?' The kid stands looking up into the Cap'n's face, biting the corner of his lip—the very trick o' the Cap'n—but don't say nothing. Says the Cap'n: 'What's your name?' 'George Dixon,' answers the kid, with nary a 'sir,' nor touch o' cap nor nothing. Cap'n sucks in his breath and I thought he had a touch o' jungle fever what used to come over him, he looked that queer. But he turns to me and says: 'Jason, take the dogs home; I don't think I'll shoot today.' Course I went, but I stopped the other side o' a bush and looked back. There was master running his fingers through the kid's hair, and they was both talking easy and familiar, like you and me would. I winks my eye to myself, but I ain't one o' them what goes round boasting what I knows."

Dixon recalled the day with poignant tensity, feeling again the kindly touch in his hair and the smiling gray eyes looking down into his own; and how he had run home with the discovery in his heart of having found the value he had hungered for—how he had declared to his mother that he would "grow up a gentleman, like the Captain," and her stinging hand and rebuke: "I'll teach ye to ape yer betters! I'll teach ye!" He recalled, too, those after-meetings with the "Cap'n" and all the poetry they awakened. He threw up his head, then in sudden determination hurried on after the boaster Beasley, to bribe, threaten, cajole the truth from him.

He caught up with him, still stumping angrily, as he was entering the village. Dixon, with one thought uppermost, hurled himself at the man without premeditation.

"Beasley"—he touched his arm and the man swung on his heel—"I overheard you say just now—I was behind the privet—that you knew something of the circumstances surrounding my birth."

"Who be you, then?"

"George Dixon."

"God's truth! You heard?"

"Yes; and I must learn what you know. If it's money—"

"It ain't money. I ain't no black-mailer. And there ain't no 'must' in it," he belligerently flung back.

Dixon changed his approach.

"I am sure you are no blackmailer, Beasley. Let us put it on moral grounds. Do you think you do right in withholding information that perhaps locks up the welfare of another?"

The man walked on ponderously, muttering: "I don't know as I ought to tell, and I don't know as I oughtn't to." He continued walking, with Dixon hanging to his side and his words. Suddenly the man reached a decision. "By God, I *will* tell ye—I ain't got no love for the Framleys, anyway. Go to St. Mary's, Burlinghamame, and search the register for the year you was born—go back ten months." He flung the last words over his shoulder as he made for Ye Boar's Head.

Dixon stood there, spellbound by the monstrous significance of the man's words. He took off his hat and ran his fingers through his hair. Why, if the man was right, the door to his dream world—the doors to life, honor, companionship—were wide and gloriously open! Oh, it could not be—it was a drunken man's boasting—it was! He started for Framley, half running, a fever throbbing his pulse—vistas of life pumping his blood, blotting out the chestnuts, the present, everything. So he came breathlessly to Framley station, to find it deserted by all but a lone signalman, who informed him that Burlinghamame was on a branch line, the first train leaving at noon the next day. But he could not wait—he had fallen to pieces, all his calm and will dissipated into trembling anxiety. He roused the livery stables—a landau, dogcart, anything. A hostler harnessed a pair of grays to a fly and a bearded driver took the reins with joyful visions of a fat fee. It was an all-night drive, through lanes impregnated with the scents of honeysuckle and dogrose, through dark woods and silent hamlets, bringing them to Burlinghamame under its morning pastoral of cockcrow and lowing cows. The driver hauled up at the Blue Dolphin and stabled while his mad fare hurried

away to the gray, machicolated tower that domed the village.

An early sexton was polishing a lantern. He gravely informed Dixon that visitors' hours were 1 to 4 P.M. A sovereign seduced him; he led the way down a crazy flight of worn stone steps to a vault where rested ponderous tomes and stood suspiciously to one side while Dixon turned the leaves over the years of births, marriages and deaths of Burlinghamame. Thirty-one years he went back rapidly, then more slowly through the months of May, April. His shaking forefinger ran down the pages, until it came to a large, bold scrawl: "George Wentworth Forsyth Framley." And underneath, in cramped schoolgirl hand, "Mary Wright."

He threw up his head with tense, stifling realization of his heritage—he, Sir George Framley, of honorable birth! A wonderful buoyancy, an infinite opaqueness, suffused and environed him; it carried him up out of the vault, through transept and nave, out into the tumbling graveyard—an illustration out of Gray's "Elegy"—and down the latticed windows of Burlinghamame to the Blue Dolphin, where he ordered breakfast for his sudden eager appetite. The buoyancy held him when he retired, in broad daylight, to a quaint room and canopied oak bed—the fancy came that this was the bed of the Captain's and the maid's idyl—he experienced a furtive thrill of pride in that father, and almost a satisfaction in his mother, arguing that she must have had charm, pleasantness to be able to entice a Framley to the altar. He had as yet no doubts, misgivings, no prying into the mystery of the later years; these did not come until he was again bowling along toward Framley, and the vulgar mistress of Ye Boar's Head—and her sottish husband and heavy progeny loomed up as hideous actualities. He felt that he could think better walking; so at Framley he dismissed his fly and set out again on foot.

The two signatures of the registry were yet stamped on his retina, pinnaclining him above the mean, the sordid, the vulgar. This was England, the Eng-

land of his dreams become fact—a land of cloistered romance, pregnant religion, hospitality and kindness. Was it but yesterday he had moved in a nightmare of despondency, of oneness? It seemed years behind. A milestone slipped into his subconsciousness: "IV miles to Little Framley"—*his* Little Framley—*his* mausoleums, *his* ancestral dead *his* traditioned past, *his* Hall—the palace of beauty, accomplishment, grace, culture. His mind began to plan; he would lift the village out of its death, waken its sons to ambition and clean living. He would take his proper place in this world; Africa was all very well, but, after all, one gets on the shelf out there. This young Sir Charles and his American wife—they will be glad to get back to their free ranch life and American institutions. Into his planning slipped the girl of the promenade deck, naturally, easily, rounding off and filling the perspectived future. His feet were keeping time to the excitement of his thoughts. So he overtook a gray skirt and sailor straw and, in the lofty interest he was now taking in things, passed "Good afternoon," and was surprised to discover a junior member of the Dixon family.

"Why, Janet! And where have you been?" he asked pleasantly.

"To Framley; I work there, in the bakery," she answered, with a touch of the awkwardness in which they all addressed him.

"That's nice. And you have a young man there, I'll be bound?"

She admitted it with a blush, and then, to his coaxing, told artlessly of her little life, a round of work days with occasional evenings at a missionary lecture, an annual Sunday-school outing to the seaside, and the picnic of the Young Girls' League. He could toy with her innocent trivialities now; but yesterday he had been irritated by a prattle that was rightfully his environment; yesterday she was a vain little fool; today she was a pleasant interest to which he temporarily descended. He gaily promised her a wedding present. He teased her about it, when, suddenly, without merciful premonition, came a thought

that swept away his play. Why, those signatures in the registry illegitimatized her—the whole family—four girls and seven boys! If he claimed his own, he published abroad their unearned shame—blighted their young lives—four simple, tinsled, pouting girls, debased and crying. He mopped his forehead. His feet carried him ahead with his quicker thoughts, dropping the wondering, half-frightened girl behind. It had all been so near his grasp—he been so ready to play at orthodox religion, charity, respectability, government—*she* had been so near! Satan must be grinning somewhere—grinning and diabolically mixing up things. He came to the village and crossed directly to Ye Boar's Head, not with definite object other than an idea to wring the mystery from his mother. For himself, self-sacrifice was a foregone conclusion—it had been the only way directly he saw that wholesale illegitimatizing.

He disturbed Mrs. Dixon at her supper. She exhibited an animalish irritation at the disturbance, resigning herself only to the strain of his face and urgent, peremptory demand for audience. She settled herself with the unwieldiness of a hippopotamus floundering in a morass. As he sat before the black silk and large, evil living face, he found himself asking what had kept her from satiating her vanity by going up to the Hall and claiming her dowager dignity. He exploded his bombshell:

"I have been to St. Mary's, Bunglame."

"My God! You 'ave?" She stared stupidly, then gasped: "Who told you? You ain't going to make no trouble—you won't go to Sir Charles?"

He had looked for an hysterical plea for the name of her children; this reverent worship for the Hall angered him to retort sharply: "There is no Sir Charles. The title rests in me, Sir George Framley, the eldest son of the eldest son."

"You!" she screamed. "You set yourself up to be gentry! Is it come to this after all my years of silence—me as could have walked up to the Hall any day, and in the front door, and give the

laugh to them as talked about the maid as run off with the gentleman! You set yourself up to be good as they?" She brought her hand down heavily on the table in her rage. Dixon dodged, from old force of habit, then grimly recovered himself. He had no argument to offer against this monumental awe of "gentry," this caste curse. He controlled himself by an effort of will and pleaded for details.

"Maybe," she said more quietly, "I ought to 'ave told you; but I didn't want to conceit you."

"Yes, you ought to have told me; I would have been content to have known. Why did he, my father, allow this wrong?"

"He hadn't no 'and in it. The old Baronet came to Burlingham and separated us—sent the Captain right off there to join his regiment, and brought me back to the Hall. The Captain went to India. I dursen't tell the old Baronet of the wedding—he took me and sat me before him and told me how once one of the family had married a maid as didn't know her station and how unhappy they was—she give herself such silly airs, and was that stuck up that the gentry laughed her poor husband out of the country. He took her to Australia, where she took to drink. I was frightened at what I'd done, and I seen my way quick to undo it; I goes straight to Dixon, as had been courting me a long time, and says, 'Yes.' We was married by special license—a trick the Captain had taught me. He heard of it out to India, and he couldn't say nothing. He didn't come home for seven years, and everything was hushed up; only him and me knowed, and that meddlesome fool, Beasley. And it had been all right if the Captain had not seen you and taken on so—he was all broken up over it. You was wonderfully like the Captain—'igh strung and domineering. Many a time I tried to thrash it out o' you, but only stubborned it in. What are you going to do? You won't make no trouble? I don't see why for you want to come 'ome; you was doing well out there."

He listened dully, his mind visualiz-

ing the girl in London, and with painfully vivid emotions of her as she had stood beside him so often when they both hung over the wake of the boat. His soul rebelled at the sacrifice. But then the wench out there at the bar, the other, the dimpling little fool with her lover talk, and two other sisters somewhere. He got slowly to his feet. He was speaking—his triumphant better self was speaking:

"Is there a train to town tonight?"

"Yes," eagerly. "I'll tell 'Arry to put in the mare; he'll drive you over to Framley."

She leaned anxiously on his acquiescence.

"Very well." He seemed to speak unconsciously, his eyes shrinking at the dreary years of sun and soul isolation and barbarians, reaching away to a fevered grave.

But the "Cap'n" had set him the example of self-sacrifice—that much was plain—and he could nurse that heroism—the one romance color in his almost colorless background. What, was that the cart already? He hesitated a moment, clutching at the golden gates, then resolutely walked to the cart.

He had meant just to touch London, pick up his baggage and his boat and escape to his African doom. But there was no boat for three days, and she was in town. He tried to forget her in a round of pilgrimage to the Abbey, Queen's Hall Symphonies, St. Paul's, Horse Guards—Meccas of the Englishman. But all this was the very life that brought her most poignantly to him; the symphony lacked her; the swelling anthem of the Abbey became a lifeless rendition, the service a masquerade, without her companionship to take them into their right atmosphere. In vain he strove to conjure up the old romance of tombed crusader, poet and ancient king; the statuesque, magnificent Life Guards only evoked carping criticism of barbarous trumpery, dwarfed manhood, souls bound in breast-plate and empty drill; the theaters were puppet shows. And ever his feet wandered toward the Hotel Cecil—to be

near to the only real, tangible force in his life. Once he saw Rose Pillsbury sweep through the rotunda to her carriage. He called a hansom and followed. But she stopped at a Bond Street jeweler's and he lost his courage. Another time he trailed her brougham to the National Gallery, but saw no hope in its public rooms. Then, on his last day, he came on her face to face at Nelson's tomb in the crypt of St. Paul's. She was one of a small party to whom a guide intoned the hero's victories with careful date and figure. It was characteristic of him that he should be wandering alone, putting his own interpretation on things. He mooned on the group absently, waking to the shock of her eyes on him. Then she seemed to pale. He at once went to her side. But she was the first to speak:

"What, back in town, Mr. Dixon? I thought that the country—horses, dogs and that—had held more inducement." Then she noticed his droop and his worn face. "You have not been well," she said quickly, with a ring of spontaneous sympathy. "Is it that horrid fever again?"

"No—oh, no. I— Oh, let us go somewhere—" He looked around, as the guide led the party off to the funeral car of Wellington. "I want to talk—that is, I would like—"

She helped him. "There is a little chapel at the far end of the crypt," she suggested.

He led down the aisle at once to where half a dozen useful cane chairs circled before a severe altar and a plain cross. He placed a seat for her, then sat down himself. They were as securely alone as in her own boudoir.

A conscious silence fell between them. He was trying hard to shape what he had to say; she was both surprised and hurt, holding herself a little stiffly, while her mind went back over their wonderful attunement, seeking to discover what it was that had destroyed it. At last he blurted out: "I am sailing for Africa tonight."

She locked and unlocked her fingers spasmodically, half rose from her seat,

then controlled herself, turning him a calm, if set, face.

"Indeed!" She was at loss for a moment; then it came to her that he had had bad news at home. "Were you then disappointed—found your people changed—"

He caught her up bitterly.

"Changed! Not one jot! They cannot change; their courses—their lives—are as set as that of the mill horse—a narrow round and round—nothing of what you or I would call life. I have played a deception on you, Miss Pillsbury. No, no; hear me out"—she had put forth a protesting hand; "I have sneaked into your'h—friendship," he substituted, "under false pretenses; my class is not your class—my people not your people." She started; his wrongs ran away with him. "My people are of those you avoid, or accept as utilities—things to be used and dismissed—the man on your box, the menial who hands your plate."

She was staring at him. She put forth her hands, as if to stop him; but there was no shrinking or repulsion.

"But *you!*" she gasped. "You are *you!*" In a breath she swept away artificial values.

He caught her hands, gaping into her wet eyes.

"Do you mean— Is it— Have I—"

She tugged at her hands. "Oh, you have hurt me! You have hurt me! You see me meanly!" She broke off with a sob.

He gaped in the wonder of it; then he worshiped. "Oh, I have dreamed of a soul like yours! I saw it, too—out there, those nights when the '*Träumeret*' rang from the saloon fanlight. But in the clear morning— Ah! but my mind was warped—I have been all my life environed by caste worship—have been under its curse from childhood." He looked at her humbly, reverently—at his highest dream of woman come true—and breathed: "Can you forgive me?"

She smiled gently. "One day," she said, "you shall tell me more of your people."

EPIGRAMS OF EVE

By SOPHIE IRENE LOEB

A DESERTED husband has the sympathy of all the widows and old maids,
while a deserted wife is looked on with suspicion.

Widows' weeds are not always grave affairs.

When a woman ceases to be strait-laced she loses caste with her sex, but a
man just begins to be popular.

Courtship is preparation; marriage is desperation; and divorce is rejuvenation.

Some women are born with beauty; some achieve beauty; but none ever have
beauty thrust upon them.



A DECK OF CARDS

By EARLE CHALLENGER RICE

A DECK of cards has many hearts
But never falls in love;
It has, I'm told, at times, cold hands
That never wear a glove;
Although the deck is often cut,
You never hear it squeal;
It ne'er complains whene'er it gets
A downright shameful deal.
To draw a card, a pencil you
Will never need at all;
A hand of cards don't visit, though
It sometimes gets a call;
To hold one's temper in a game
Is very little use,
For if you pick a two-spot up,
You're sure to raise the deuce.

THE BATTLE OF THE GENERALS

By FREDERIC ARNOLD KUMMER

THERE are two generals in the republic of Managua—yet, before the reader has an opportunity to question my veracity, let me hasten to proclaim that Barney McCann, who told me this story, and who has been there and ought to know, avers that there are not less than two thousand, or if by chance there be but one thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine, the odd one will be found to be a surgeon general or a commissary general, or a general of some other equally decorative variety.

There are, I say, two generals in the republic of Managua who are enemies of such a deadly and venomous nature that nothing short of blood, and blood, be it understood, of one or the other or indeed the both of them, will ever suffice to slake their thirst for gore, who are yet, by the dictates of a cruel fate, as clearly unable to meet upon the field of honor as though no such institution for assuaging the pangs of lacerated *amour propre* existed within the broad confines of the Managuan republic. Yet it is a fact indisputable, a matter indeed of the commonest knowledge, that the *duello* as an institution is rated highly in Managuan military circles, and carried on as it should be, with all due and regardful ceremony, after the most approved Spanish custom, with one, two and upon occasion even three seconds to lend each contestant moral support.

Why then should Generals Roderigo Miguel da Costa Santa Anna Fernandez y Tobosco, and Rafael Pedro Maria Ramon Agramonte y Escamillo be unable to experience those pleasurable emotions which the sight of the gore of either could not fail to arouse in the

breast of the other? Why, in other words, should they not fight?

They did, fair reader, and with such invincible courage, such doughty and implacable ferocity, that the fame of that encounter has passed into history and become no small part of the annals of the republic of Managua, wherein it is referred to alike by historian and bard as the Battle of the Generals. Yet the conflict, sad to relate, ended, so Barney tells me, in a draw, and, for reasons which will appear as time and this story progress, was for the principals therein positively a last appearance. It can never be repeated. The best that the two unfortunates can do is to curl their mustachios yet more fiercely heavenward and glare balefully at each other from opposite sides of the street while the temperature of the vicinity is subject to a sudden and uncomfortable rise. Fight they cannot. Barney McCann, who told me this story, says so, and he was there and ought to know.

"'Twas whin I was in th' raypublic of Managua," he began. I was not in the least surprised to learn that he had been in Managua. If I ever start a discussion of Paradise with him I know he will start off with, "'Twas whin I was in Hivin' th' last trip," or something of the sort. Barney says—but we must get on. He spoils a story by too much digression. I intend to tell this one in my own way.

General Roderigo Miguel etc., etc. Tobosco, commander in chief of the Managuan army, in all the glittering panoply of war as conducted in Central America in general and in the republic of Managua in particular, rode with many a delightful curvette and caracole

THE BATTLE OF THE GENERALS

up the broad and sunny Plaza del Oro toward the palace of the Presidente. The General was making a triumphal entry into the capital in celebration of his momentous and never-to-be-forgotten victory over the revolutionary forces, which had, under the leadership of the redoubtable General Valdez, affectionately called by his followers "The Buzzard," advanced almost to the city's walls. General Tobosco was full of joy and medals. Barney McCann, who told me this story, said he jingled as he went like a West Street horse car. The fact that among his decorations shone with brazen effrontery a souvenir of the Hudson-Fulton Celebration and a committeeeman's badge of the last annual convention of the Gas Fitters' Union detracted in no wise from either the General's effulgence or his peace of mind. On the contrary, they indicated him to be a traveler and a man of discrimination and taste in matters both military and decorative.

Behind the General rode his staff, almost equally resplendent. The combined effect was trying to the eyesight—many of the spectators were forced to turn aside as the brilliant cortège passed by. "A Fulton Street push-cart man," said Barney, "wid smoked glasses for sale, would have had a pipe." The staff occupied quite a long time in passing. The army brought up the rear, heroes all, from their bare brown feet to their fragrant brown cigarettes. They marched in the form of a hollow square, within which, in halters of seven-eighths-inch rope, was dragged along the crest-fallen and dispirited revolution, or such part of it as having been made captive now graced the General's triumph. Their expressions were varied, but all wore an underlying appearance of terror, having thought, no doubt, of the bare white wall back of the fortress, with the narrow groove which numberless bullets had made in the plaster about the height of a man's heart from the ground. The crowds were enthusiastically appreciative. Their *vivas* for everything and everybody from the General and the Republic down to the last *aguardiente*-laden straggler in the rear ranks could

not have been better executed had the chorus been trained for a Broadway comic opera. The captives were numerous—to be exact, seventeen. The rebellion was dispersed. The Managuan army had fired 120,000 rounds of ammunition and four dead *insurrectos* had been interred upon the bloody field. The very blue vault of heaven had been rent, torn and punctured by their salvos of musketry, and Managua was saved. Soon the General would arrive at the palace, there to receive yet another glittering decoration, presented with an enthusiastic embrace and a kiss in the region of the left ear by the Presidente himself.

Yet General Tobosco was not happy. There was a fly in his ointment, and one of no common or household variety but a blue bottle, a horse fly indeed, large and annoying. The General twisted his mustachios fiercely, until they pointed to the blazing zenith, bowed yet again to the admiring populace, then glanced with uneasiness, nay, with positive apprehension, at the gold-hilted cavalry sword which dangled at his left side. It was a beautiful sword, a new and virgin weapon, which, as its untailed exterior proclaimed, had never yet been drawn in the glorious service of the Republic. A new sword, his observers commented, a sword for the occasion, for the grand triumph of this so memorable a day. Alas! a new sword, indeed, yet would General Tobosco have been of a more complacent frame of mind had the time-honored weapon which until today had graced his left hip been there now, with all the scars of warfare and stains of honorable service which had come to it upon both the cane and battle fields, to lend its sharp tongue to the silencing of calumny and slander. For calumny and slander there were, though as yet but of the faintest, like the far-off twittering of birds among the tree tops. Soon, he feared, in spite of regulations military and orders peremptory, it would sound about the marble-topped tables in the cafés of Managua's capital like the clatter of the paroquets in her native forests.

And thus would run the tale. As the

grand army of the republic of Managua, headed in spirit if not in person by General Toboso, debouched with a great clatter of accoutrements and a delightful odor of cigarette smoke into the San Jacinto road, it had been fired upon with villainous and most unexpected ferocity by the advance guards of the forces of the *insurrectos*. General Toboso, far from expecting this, was just in the act of lighting a fresh cigarette from the expiring stump of the one before it, and his trusty and battle-scarred blade, bare and trenchant, was tightly held beneath his left arm. It is averred by the General himself, and hence should be veracious, that the sudden crackle of firing from the underhanded ambuscade frightened his horse at just that unpropitious moment when the General's hands were both busily engaged, the one holding the butt of the expiring cigarette, the other its virginal successor, and that the horse, a very devil of a horse, be it known, on occasion, had wheeled and bolted to the rear, unchecked by its master's restraining hands, so obviously and properly occupied elsewhere. The result of this retrograde movement, during which the General's trusty sword had slipped incontinently from its moorings under his left arm and whirled into the neighboring cane brush, was to create an impression, an illusion, a veritable mirage, of General Roderigo etc., etc. Toboso fleeing in abject and cowardly confusion from the field of battle, his reins upon his charger's neck, his hat awry, his sword cast to the four winds.

By the time the General had regained command of his horse and rejoined the attacking column, the Managuan army had already delivered several hundred thousand *vivas* and 75,600 rounds of good ammunition vertically into the ambient atmosphere. "'Tis glad I am, sorr, I wasn't hoverin' round in no aeroplane," said Barney. "Airships won't never make no headway agin them fellows, believe me. I lights me pipe an' lays down under a cocoanut tree. 'Twas safer there, an' I wasn't lookin' to be made into no porous plaster by me own men. 'Tis meself as was an officer av

th' foordes av th' Raypublic, a colonel, sorr, which wasn't much as officers goes down there, but 'twas th' best I could do, and I was sick av me job on th' banana farrm. Th' fight rayminded me av th' Boer War at old Coney. 'Twas like th' Fourth av July, only more so." But I mustn't let Barney run this story, or we never will get to the duel. He digresses too much.

When the smoke of battle cleared away the ground was thickly covered with dead cartridge cases, and the pickets of the revolutionists had retired in confusion upon their main body, who were enjoying a peaceful *siesta* under the shade of some neighboring mango trees. The retiring of the pickets upon the main body had been rude and boisterous—more than one *insurrecto* had been awakened by the sudden planting of a retiring foot in the pit of his stomach. In fifteen minutes the revolution had surrendered. General Toboso, now returned and raging swordless about the field of battle, had issued his commands in a manner not unworthy, he felt, of his model, Napoleon. His orders regarding the securing and manacling of the captives were masterly, his disposition of his forces for the return march to the capital an epitome of military strategy. Yet, strange to relate, the General's sword could not be found, and even the promise of a major's commission as a reward did not result in its recovery. The brush alongside the road was searched by the entire army for over an hour, but the sword of its general was among the missing. Hence General Toboso's hasty visit to the shop of Estevan Gomez, the dealer in the panoplies of war, and his perturbation of mind upon this, the morning of his great triumph.

General Toboso's most cordial enemy was General Rafael Pedro Maria Ramon Agramonte y Escamillo, the recently appointed secretary of war. Gall and wormwood was it indeed to General Escamillo to receive word of his rival's glorious victory. Upon the arrival of the victorious army the evening before he had been waited upon by one José Sanchez, a trusty and reliable adherent

and soldier of the Republic, who had told him a story and presented him with a long and slender object wrapped in the folds of an old cloak. This General Escamillo had laid away with many secret chucklings against the morrow.

General Tobosco, amid the plaudits of the populace, at last reached the entrance of the palace, dismounted, and throwing his reins to an orderly, ascended the grand stairway and proceeded with military honors to the chamber wherein were grouped the Presidente, the cabinet, and the notable personages of state, sweltering under such a profusion of gold lace and decorations that even General Tobosco, who had done his best, felt a slight sensation of eclipse. In due course the salutes were made, the congratulations of the Presidente received and the decoration of the Order of the Brotherhood of the Golden Butterfly glittered proudly upon the General's padded chest, some eight or nine inches due east of the Hudson-Fulton memento and southwest by south of the emblem of the Gas Fitters' Union. General Tobosco was glowing but perturbed, for he observed the sinister smile with which General Escamillo glanced from time to time at the bright yellow hilt of his new sword. He placed his gloved left hand upon it, nervously, as though to hide its shining luster, but it appeared suddenly to have grown to a size most enormous—its shining gold basket hilt seemed to him like a huge bunch of ripe bananas.

At a lull in the ceremonies, immediately preceding General Roderigo's preparations for departure, General Escamillo approached with a congratulatory smile. "Alas! my dear General," he cried suavely, sympathetically, "I have learned of your most distressing accident. What brave man can contemplate without anguish the loss of a beloved weapon upon the field of battle? It fills me with satisfaction to report that when you so unfortunately were obliged to cast it from you, owing, of course, to the exigencies of war, a trusty servant stood near by, through whose agency it has been recovered in safety." The Secretary of War made a low bow,

and extended to the General his battle-scarred blade. "It gives me sincere pleasure, General," he purred, "to present to you your sword."

General Tobosco drew back a step and regarded the weapon coldly. "My sword!" he said with grave imperturbability. "You are mistaken, General. This is no sword of mine."

He observed smiles about the room. Evidently General Escamillo's friends were in the secret.

"Does General Tobosco mean to imply that I say that which is not true?" cried the Secretary angrily.

General Tobosco met the issue squarely. "If you say that is my sword, you do," he growled.

General Escamillo drew his glove softly across General Tobosco's cheek. "I shall await your representatives here, señor," he said silkily.

General Tobosco bowed. "You shall be accommodated, señor," he replied, and saluting stiffly, withdrew.

Barney McCann saw the duel from the shelter of a near-by banana tree. Why or how he happened to be there I do not know, and if we attempt to permit him to tell, we will end up at Port Arthur or the North Pole, I feel sure, so we will let it go at that. He acted as a sort of self-appointed umpire, it seems, and kept score. "'Twas a dangerous job," said Barney, "but I held me ground behind th' banana tree wid rare prisence av mind. It rayminded me av th' time I was wid Admiral Dewey at th' Battle av"—but I knew just how it would be; this thing has got to stop.

The Battle of the Generals began at seven in the morning. Amid the mists of departing night stood two stern and warlike figures. On one side General Tobosco in cavalry boots, riding breeches and a snowy shirt; on the other General Escamillo in correct morning costume minus his coat. To the left of General Escamillo, at no great distance, stood his three seconds, Generals Escovedo, Montesinos and De la Torre, in full regimentals. At a similar distance from General Tobosco stood his three seconds, Generals Robledo, Escheverria and Aguilar, also in

full regiments. Midway between these two imposing forces stood General Valdez, whose part in the proceedings it was to deliver the word of command, the signal for firing. A surgeon general, with his kit of tools, stood resplendent beneath a near-by tree. The sun shone softly from a pearly sky. Generals Tobosco and Escamillo, glaring unutterable hatred at each other through their fiercely curled mustachios, held each a heavy duelling pistol and with vague inward tremors prepared for the fray. The Battle of the Generals was on. It was to be a gory field. Barney referred to it as a "dago joke."

At the word, "Attention," shouted in a stentorian voice by General Valdez, the arms of the two contestants trembled into an unwonted rigidity—they glared at each other no longer; the time for glaring had passed. They awaited the word "fire" with a certain feeling of depression in the region of the solar plexus, which transferred itself, in the form of visible quavers, to their right arms. In a moment it came, followed by the words, "one," "two," "three," marking the interval within which the contestants must deliver their shots. Generals Escamillo and Tobosco gritted their teeth, raised their wavering weapons, closed their eyes and blazed away.

As the smoke drifted seaward upon the early morning breeze General Montesinos, of the Escamillo forces, was seen to sit down suddenly upon a cactus plant and gaze ruefully the while at a bullet hole in his left foot. There were no other casualties. It being uncertain which of the two contestants had scored this signal hit, both apologized profusely. "A thousand pardons, my dear General!" cried General Tobosco, rushing up. "I can never forgive myself for such carelessness." General Escamillo fell upon his second's neck and kissed him upon both cheeks. "Alas! my comrade, my brother, the fortunes of war—but you shall be avenged." He glared fiercely at General Tobosco, who had resumed his station. General Montesinos looked at his wound and said nothing. His thoughts we can doubt-

less imagine. I can hear Barney from behind the tree—"Strike one! Play ball!"

Again the two contestants faced each other. The two groups of seconds manfully stood their ground, with the exception of General Montesinos, who sat upon a stump and received the attention of the surgeon. Again the signal to fire, and once more the smoke of battle cleared away. The score was a decided improvement. General de la Torre had an arm put out of commission. The Tobosco forces were reduced by the fall of General Robledo, who lost an ear. With two of the Escamillo contingent *hors du combat* and but one of those of Tobosco, the round seemed slightly in favor of the latter. "They was both a bit groggy at th' bell," said Barney; "'twas anybody's fight so far." Evidently the seconds had begun to think so.

The contestants appeared slightly relieved to discover that they were both as yet unharmed, and tendered their mutual apologies with greater fervor than before. The surgeon general, who was doing a land-office business, moved the field hospital over the brow of the hill. Honor remaining unsatisfied, however, another shot was imperative. In spite of military pride, there was a noticeable shrinking upon the part of the two adherents to the cause of Tobosco and the one remaining to the Escamillo forces as the irate duellists prepared for the third round. They had an expectant look—and there seemed a generous rivalry between them as to which should have the foremost place. Barney says: "They was that pale around th' gills, they looked almost like white men. Th' fattest one was th' palest, an whin he looked longingly at me tree I couldn't f'r the life av me help bustin' out laughin'. 'Twas six sizes too small f'r him, and none too big f'r me, neither."

General Valdez, hero of seventy revolutions, scorned all danger. Once more he gave the fatal signal. When the dark pall of battle had lifted, General Escovedo, the last of the Escamillo forces, clapped his hand to his left shoul-

der and broke for cover. General Valdez with concern observed his Sunday best cocked hat spin skyward, badly punctured. Generals Escheverria and Aguilar, the latter shy two fingers, disappeared in a cloud of dust. "Twas a Marathon they did back to town," said Barney. "The Battle av th' Ginerals was over. Score, three strikes f'r old Tobosco, two and a spare f'r the Sicitary av War. Tobosco wins on points."

If it is not at once evident to the reader why the combat mortal between Generals Tobosco and Escamillo can never be renewed, I can only suggest that he take a trip to Managua and offer himself in the capacity of second to either party. Somehow seconds, for that particular engagement, are not a drug in the market. Both General

Tobosco and his adversary have from time to time approached their brother officers for the purpose of obtaining their services for a renewal of the engagement, but, alas! they always seem to have business of a personal nature which, to their infinite and everlasting regret prevents their etc., etc. Furthermore, the Presidente has announced his intention of forbidding duelling among the officers of the army. Plentiful as generals are in the republic of Managua, there is a limit even to their supply. Hence it happens that Generals Escamillo and Tobosco pass each other scornfully, upon opposite sides of the street, and twirl their mustachios more fiercely skyward than ever. The thing has become an hereditary feud. Barney says he shouldn't wonder if it ultimately became a revolution.



GOOD-BYE, PIERETTE

By THEODOSIA GARRISON

GOOD-BYE, Pierette. The new moon waits
Like some shy maiden at the gates
Of rose and pearl, to watch us stand
This little moment, hand in hand—
Nor one red rose its watch abates

The low wind through your garden prates
Of one this twilight desolates.

Ah, was it this your roses planned?
Good-bye, Pierette.

Oh, merriest of little mates,
No sadder lover hesitates
Beneath this moon in any land;
Nor any roses, watchful, bland,
Look on a sadder jest of Fate's.
Good-bye, Pierette.

THE UNDERBIDDER

By ELEANOR RAE BURN

AN open fire of blazing birch logs. Before it, dashed with its high lights, the picturesque figure of a diminutive woman luxuriously reclined in the depths of a Morris chair, a ponderous tome, unread, lying open across her lap. With small, heavily jeweled hands clasped behind her yellow head, her violet eyes queried vague subtleties from the leaping flames beyond the dull black andirons in a reverie that was apparently both pleasant and introspective.

It was all violet and yellow, the picture, in a somber framing, the woman's profile and costume thrown into vivid relief by the monotone austerity of her immediate surroundings. No draperies at the windows, no painted masterpieces on the neutral walls, no concessions to comfort save the necessary chairs, no rugs—if one excepted the tawny sprawl of half-grown leopard skin spread in front of the fire, whereon a large Persian cat snoozed blissfully—and even the books in the background, a reference library exclusively, housed in dark bindings. A bronze bust of Maeterlinck held supremacy above them, dividing that honor *vis-à-vis* with two noteworthy symbols of Wisdom and Fame—a stuffed white owl and Napoleon's death mask. A wreath of fresh laurel leaves adorned the metal brows of Maeterlinck.

The woman herself focused color in plenty. A definite blotch of gorgeousness, not unlike the gold and purple of crocuses blooming against a lichenized wall, she resembled a forecast of spring in the lap of winter. Firelight lent gracious luminosity to the soft yellow of her draperies, and gave a grape-like bloom

to the rich iris velvet of the pillows at her elbows. Her purple slippers and silken hosiery artlessly suggested, and the violets burgeoning on her breast plainly indicated, an unsuppressed weakness for the resources of feminine adornment—but, more than that, the true artist instinct for appropriate contrast.

An artist she was, *sans doute*, the artist of vocabulary in her *atelier*, a woman builder with words in her workshop, her tools a desk and inkpot, her authorities the bookshelves around her, her materials the fabric of a rare imagination. Nature had endowed her generously with gifts of expression, and once when her pen had spoken through a volume of gemlike essays, the world had paused a moment to listen. It was getting ready to pause again, for that commanding pen had not been idle.

A voice in the hall broke in upon her reverie, calling, "Leslie! Leslie!" but she did not bother to reply. Instead, she tossed a velvet pillow at the sleeping cat with a gay little laugh, and resumed her reverie.

The cat arose, and stretching himself, assumed a sphinxlike attitude facing her. His blinking efforts to keep awake were truly comical, as he nodded with contemptuous dignity at the purple pillow which had assailed his dreams.

Again the voice in the hall called, "Leslie! Leslie!"

"That's Margaret calling me, Omar," she said, addressing the cat. "Let's pretend that we don't hear her. She wants to come up here and disturb us with her talk about the poor, the sick and the friendless—and it's so much nicer to be quiet and alone, now isn't it?"

Omar opened his mouth and yawned as if the subject bored him indescribably, and adjusted his whiskers for another long nap in his cozy corner by the leopard's ear.

"Come, come, Omar; you grow silly from sleep!" she laughed. "Go and forage for your dinner, old fellow. 'The mouse makes merry 'mid the larder shelves, and the sparrows chirp in the ivy.'"

The feline dozer opened one eye and gazed at her with majestic unconcern. It was pleasanter at this moment to dream of the glories of the chase than to execute them.

"What—still sleepy, lazy bones? Go to! Wake up and tell me your opinion of the poet's fantasy:

Sometimes I think that Allah may
When He created cats have thrown away
The tails He marred in making, and they
grew
To cat tails and to pussywillows gray.

"How does that coincide with your preconceived ideas of reincarnation and nine-lived immortality—eh?"

Omar dozed on unconsciously, but Leslie was not to be deterred. Seizing the other velvet pillow, she dangled a purple tassel just above his whiskered nose teasingly.

"Bid, old fellow—bid, I say; bid high!" she cried with excited mirth. "Catch it, and you shall have a smelt for your dinner, but remember, if you underbid—nothing but exile and a meatless bone!"

Omar's racial traits were merely in abeyance, and under this incitement he was soon pawing the air and vaulting and dodging in the old cat game of parry and attack. Leslie was in the full swing of the merriment, when the door opened to admit Margaret.

"Didn't you hear me calling, Leslie?" she asked with an injured air. "I thought you must have gone out walking—from your not answering."

"Oh, yes, I heard you," was Leslie's complacent rejoinder; "but Omar and I were having such an intellectual dialogue—and I couldn't break off without being impolite."

"That silly old cat!" ejaculated Mar-

garet angrily, sitting down to await Leslie's pleasure, for the game of tag had not abated.

Margaret Hallowell was the elderly cousin with whom Leslie made her home, and the only person privileged to disturb the latter's moods and solitude during the hours—now nearing a respite—usually devoted to work in her studio. Margaret's entrance at this time did not necessarily mean anything important, but it was evident that she came upon a special mission. A bundle of printer's galley proofs streamed from the fingers of one hand, and her expression was distinctly aggressive; it signified the imminent resurrection of an argument that had been fought already to a finish, but in which recrudescence was to take the form of appeal—appeal of the strenuous family sort that compels a yielding will. Her severe black dress and slender figure, her erect, iron-gray head with its clear-cut cameo face and her nervous fingers that crushed the proofs in their tense grasp, all bespoke a definite and dominating purpose. Leslie reseated herself with resignation.

"Oh, don't you see—can't you appreciate, Leslie, what a mistake it would be to leave your characters in that unexplained situation?" she began, planting herself in front of her, with one foot resting on the leopard's head, while Leslie regarded her with humorous but indulgent cynicism. "This novel of yours is but a fragment at present—a thing demanding a sequel. With such a banal conclusion, the reader is brought up abruptly against a stone wall, and closes the book with utter dissatisfaction. Come, dear, listen to me; there is still time to add another chapter, setting everything straight. Write it today—this very minute. Three pages will do it; two would be enough. Oh, do be reasonable for once! I can see it with the wisdom of years, as you do not, but as the vast unsparing public will inevitably judge it; therefore, let me persuade you—"

"But—you don't understand," objected Leslie with lofty unconcern; "and if the vast, unsparing public cannot understand it any better than you

do—then my work has been worse than wasted. What does it matter? I shall never write down to the level of the great sensual public—no, never!"

"But you do not despise its money and recognition, remember!"

"Oh, yes—I do! It must come up to the heights with me, or it cannot hear my message."

"Your message!" sneered Margaret, pacing the floor in agitated strides. "And, pray, what *is* your message but a purely commercial desire to write a book that shall bring you in a sufficient return to pay off our debts and allow us to travel?"

"Mistaken again, Margaret, dear," laughed Leslie, closing the tome on her lap with an air of finality. "Besides, isn't that rather personal?"

"Of course it is. I meant it to be personal. I wanted to strike home. I want you to see it from *my* point of view. Oh, *can't* you do it, Leslie? I implore you to listen before it is too late."

"Yes, dear, I *am* listening—simply because it is you who talk—and because it *is*—too late."

"Don't be flippant, Leslie! I am seriously in earnest." She shook the proofs in her nervous hand. "You are capable of sustained effort; then show it now. Bring your lovers right up to the only possible conclusion for them."

"I have," Leslie answered lazily—"the only artistic and logical conclusion; but because I balked at the benediction of the priest, you—"

"There, now!" Margaret said, turning swiftly. "You're so afraid of being conventional that you've rushed to the other extreme. It is neither artistic nor logical. Don't I know? Can't I feel how the critics will slash you? You are just as unreasonable as all the rest of the Bayards. Take the case: Can you suppose that a man of your Allston's initiative and wealth would ever have been deterred by such paltry feminine resistances as your Lucy has set up? No—a thousand times no! He knew that Lucy loved him—their sympathy through books and pictures and a love of nature was perfect—you have drawn

them without a barrier; and yet in the end you make her reject his love, because, forsooth, she would be obliged to renounce her career! Bah! Her little tuppenny career of helping fallen sisters to their feet and binding up the broken-hearted—"

"That sounds rather worth while, it strikes me," murmured Leslie with a distinctly bored air. "Somewhat in your own line, Margaret."

"Stuff and nonsense!" was her spirited reply. "Imagine how much wider would have been her usefulness—her career, if you choose to call it so—backed by his aid and sympathy and money—yes, money! She could have built hospitals, founded rescue homes to her heart's content—and—and—"

"Your eloquence surprises me, Margaret!" said Leslie calmly. "But you don't comprehend the temperament of the woman I have depicted—her work was her life; it was *always* first; nor do you understand men as well as I do."

Margaret paused and stared at her.

"I—me—not understand men—as well as you do! Come, come! When I've survived two ill-tempered husbands in succession! You go and live with a nervous dyspeptic for six months and then see whether you don't understand all the whims and jealousies and vagaries of which mankind is capable. Really,—that is a great joke, Leslie. I must go and tell it to Gerald."

As she moved toward the door, Leslie rose and clutched her dress daintily.

"To Gerald?" she queried anxiously. "Not Gerald Bronson, surely? You don't mean to tell me that he is still in the house? I sent word more than an hour ago that I would not see him—"

"Yes, yes, I know," stammered Margaret, "but he remained to talk—with me. We have been discussing your final chapter. It was he who urged me to come again and plead with you."

"Ah—indeed! Then your opinions so vigorously expressed just now were merely second-hand inventions!"

"Not at all; Gerald and I were perfectly in accord. We both felt that it was a pity to let it go at that. He

said it was worth braving your displeasure to make one last appeal."

"Oh, he said that; but he would not make that appeal himself. Fancy it!"

"How could he, when you had positively refused to see him? I volunteered to intercede for him."

"Wondrously kind, I'm sure. A situation must be desperate, indeed, when Gerald cannot speak for himself. Nevertheless, I've decided to see him. Tell him to come up."

II

MARGARET hurried from the room, and Leslie laughed softly to herself as she adjusted the purple pillows, pulled out her hair into fluffiness and patted her violets. In a moment the door opened. She did not lift her eyes to greet the new intruder, but poked her foot playfully at the unconscious cat.

"You sent for me, Leslie," said a rich, full voice at her elbow revealing temperament of a rare quality, "and I dare say you've something more cynical and cruel than usual to say, because I've attempted, through Margaret, to express my remonstrance. But I feel it so deeply that I—I—"

"Then why did you not come personally to me about it?"

"You would not see me. I have made two attempts today to reach you, without result."

"Your methods are deplorably indirect. Once you sent me some violets and inquired about my health—which is always excellent, and the second time you wrote a message asking me to go out and walk with you, when you know I abhor tramping about in the snow—"

"But I wanted to see you alone, Leslie—to plead with you—"

"Oh, well, I'm not a cloistered nun, although I do pine for solitude when the joy of work is on me. Sometimes you are really almost amusing, Gerald."

She lifted her violet eyes and let them rest upon him speculatively.

"You see," he said, as he moved over toward the window, "I'm so anxious for

you, Leslie; I don't want you to miss your great opportunity. Remember:

Soon or late
I knocked unbidden once at every gate!
and this is your compelling *once*. Listen
to the voice"—his own became vibrant
with feeling—

If sleeping, wake; if feasting, rise before
I turn away! It is the hour of fate!

Do you hear that, Leslie? It is your 'hour of fate'! Hesitate no longer, but sit down and write the proper *finale* to 'The Underbidder.' Write it in the name of art, if not of friendship."

With a gesture of repudiation, she turned her charming head aside, and lifting a cigarette from the adjacent shelf, lighted it in her jeweled fingers and began to smoke.

"Don't do that," he pleaded anxiously.

"Why not?"

"Because you *must* not—I say so!" he commanded.

"Must not?" She threw back her head and blew a stream of smoke toward the ceiling, but she was not displeased at his masterful manner.

"Mannish airs are most unbecoming to you," he explained, retreating mentally. "Besides, it's coarse and vulgar and *emancipée*."

"Et tu, Bruté!" laughed Leslie. "Like Margaret, you must deal necessarily in personalities. Such a pity, for I object!" and she blew another great puff of smoke toward the sleeping cat. "We were speaking, were we not, of my book?"

"So we were—of your book. Oh, can't you see the mistake of it all—you who possess such wonderful perspicacity, such a cool business head?"

"Ah—a moment ago it was art; now it is business. Believe me, you are wasting your breath."

"Don't say that, Leslie; be reasonable!"

She pondered for a moment, still smoking, and then faced him decisively. Lifting her pretty arm, from which the ruffles of her yellow silk sleeve fell away in lacy draperies, she pointed an emphatic finger at him and said:

"Now listen to me, Gerald; let us understand each other. While I'm not unappreciative of your kindly interest, you evidently misinterpret the fundamental *motif* of the book, because you have always refused to accept my well-known point of view—absolute individualism for women—"

"Certainly I have!" he broke in. "For what, pray, does woman's individualism ultimately lead her to but celibacy? And the world is already crowded with feminine celibates—women whose manifest destiny was to have become good wives and mothers, the inspiration and companions of stalwart men, but who, through this obstructive and insidious policy, are now alone and embittered."

"Come, come—tell me, why?" was her vehement interruption. "You would find upon inquiry, no doubt, that those same feminine celibates had been sought in marriage only by dissolute men, and that—such is the false attitude in which woman has been placed by centuries of oppression—her freedom of choice is denied expression. Naturally their self-respect has recoiled from placing a stigma upon their descendants. That's the *crux* of the whole situation—they didn't have a fair chance!"

"Well," laughed Gerald, "don't look at me so fiercely, Leslie! I've never denied any of them their rights of selection."

"Give us a race of decent husbands," she went on, unheeding, "and our bachelor maids will sing a swan song to celibacy. But that would not alter the modern spirit—the right to live their own lives according to their own self-made standards."

"Ah—there's the message for you!" he cried, his fine face aglow. "Don't preach the individual life for women—that's always more or less absurd; but preach the square deal for them—that every woman in life may have her chance to develop through love, clean, wholesome, mutual love—the only way a woman can ever truly develop. Preach, if you *must* be a reformer, the gospel of an equal moral code for both, and you've done something for the re-

generation of your species while you live; but this futile fallacy of individualism, making a woman heedless of the call of love, denying all the fundamental instincts of her nature and refusing to herself the glorious part in the perpetuation of her race—no—no!" He shook his head positively.

"Steady, Gerald, steady!" warned Leslie, pointing her cigarette at him with a dash of coquetry.

"As for me," he continued, swept onward by the flow of his ideas "I would stamp out woman's individualism with both feet whenever it reared its ugly hydra head."

"Ah—that's the man's generous point of view!" she replied sneeringly, with short puffs.

"Every one of them," he continued, "who is sewing on buttons and darning a husband's socks, nursing colicky babies or cooking oatmeal porridge, has done a greater benefit for her day and generation than all of the sentimental reformers who are attempting settlement work or sailing as missionaries. Oh, don't mar your magnificent characters by making mere sentimentalists of them, Leslie! It distresses me!"

"Don't let it!" she interjected, with more puffs.

"Of course," he went on, "I'm not a genius like you, but I'm simple and honest and faithful, and I understand some things that you do not. If I had my way, every woman who has been a homemaker in the real sense should be exalted and recompensed and given a life pension after her husband's death. Don't you see? It would be an awful mistake not to give your heroine her *real* chance, Leslie."

Although his auditor's face expressed only indulgent amusement, she was inwardly impressed by his words and sat pondering them for a moment or so. Presently she said:

"Why excite yourself over such a trifle?"

"It is not a trifle—quite the reverse!" he asseverated. "It means everything to you—and to me! Besides, you've missed the real psychologic climax of your story, and you make your Lucy a

prig of a woman at the end, after having drawn her throughout with truth and skill."

"I have not!" declared Leslie, tossing her cigarette into the birch logs and watching the rice paper become a wraith of itself. "My climax is exactly what it should be. You are pleading for the perfectly obvious, but I have drawn a mystic, a dreamer, a sentimentalist, if you will, in Lucy, and I could not possibly shatter her ideals by marrying her to the usual magnate in the conventional style at the end, making him overcome her objections by a stagy kiss and hug, without destroying the whole fabric of the story. I have written something above the ordinary physical appeal."

"Exactly!" he cried, compelling her evasive eyes. "You have taken no account of passion—the great overwhelming force that binds the human world—the fire of love that burns away misunderstanding and makes men and women godlike in self-sacrifice and devotion. Good gracious, Leslie, don't indorse an intellectual monstrosity! With a man of your Allston's caliber, your book should end in such a whirlwind of passion that the woman would be literally swept from her feet. Do you suppose that a man so independent in thought and action as he showed himself throughout, who gloried in his defiance of the narrow Puritan opinions of their village, would ever have let her get away from him? Never! He would have stolen her—"

"Absurd!" she murmured, yet unwillingly fascinated by his glowing eyes and the tempest of his argument.

"He'd have carried her off, as the Sabine women were kidnapped but what he would have held her. How can you be so blind to the dramatic force of the situation? Just imagine how Charlotte Bronte would have treated it!"

"Charlotte Bronte has been dead for many years," she answered in a low tone. "She was not confronted by the extraordinary conditions that exist today."

"No—but her books still live. Old Human Nature must always speak

truthfully through one's pages, the eternal verities that sway us all and never change. Don't you see what I mean?"

"Oh, yes—I see what you mean," she answered, rising and walking to the window, where she gazed out over the snow-clad hills. He drew closer to her.

"Then, why are you so obtuse to your own best interests?"

"I'm not. You will appreciate my position better when I tell you that it has been fully verified by three good critics whose opinion I value."

Her gaze wandered from the snow-bound pastures to the leafless woods, where the descending sun was placing a semicolon on the early spring day.

Gerald clasped his hands in helpless despair.

"Your critics—who are they?" he retorted. "Men who profess to adore you because you are clever and beautiful and witty—they will not tell you the truth as I do."

"The truth!" she repeated dreamily. "Like Pontius Pilate, I must always ask you, 'What is truth?'"

"They only flatter you," he added impetuously. "They cannot understand the real woman back of it all—the woman whom—I love!"

She turned swiftly, caught unaware by the sudden tumult of his confession. It was as if they had both been waiting long for the spoken word, that their souls might approach each other.

"Do you mean it?" she asked with childish simplicity. Her violet eyes were wonderfully luminous. Her hand trembled.

"Oh, yes; but why tell you what you have always known?"

If she had, she gave no sign of it. Her woman wit advised diplomacy, for now suddenly the equation had become intensely personal. She stood on the tiptoe of interested curiosity, expectant of further avowals.

"Look—look!" he cried in visible excitement. "They are coming—your critics; and I must go. I've no desire to meet them."

She put forth her hand to detain him, and then drew herself up with extreme dignity as she said: "Yes, they are

coming—my critics, to have a cup of tea with me. They have remembered that it is my thirtieth birthday, which you did not. We shall have tea served up here in my study. It will be a novel experience; they will enjoy it and say delightful things about the priestess in her temple. I shall be very witty and charming, for they are my *claqueurs* who work up interest for me."

"Oh, no doubt!" he replied with bitterness of tone. "They are so much more valuable to you than anybody else could possibly be!" Then he said with sudden disgust: "See them plodding along through the snow! They remind me of the Mind, the Soul and the Body Universal, as typified in the great head of the publishing house which prints and sells your book, our good rector, who persuades his congregation to read whatever you write, and the theatrical manager who is about to dramatize it. You, as a symbolist, ought to appreciate the conjunction. Is it not significant that one comes over the hilltops; one walks close to the fence like the conservative that he is, and the third takes the middle of the great open highway?"

"You shall not satirize my friends," declared Leslie defensively. "By the way, if you're going, kindly ask Margaret to come up to me for a moment."

She offered him the tips of her fingers.

"And the final chapter—you will revise it?" he queried anxiously, still holding the hand.

"By no means; why should I?"

"For no very good reason, perhaps," he stammered; "but I thought that—that—because I asked it—"

"That's no reason at all—unless—"

"May I see you tomorrow afternoon?"

"If it's about that chapter—no. I'm not to be persuaded."

"May I call on Wednesday?"

"If it's about that chapter—"

"Rest easy; it isn't."

"Then, why wait until Wednesday? Why couldn't you say what you have to say right now?"

"I could, if I tried to. The truth is, I've a question to ask. It is this: Will you have me, Leslie?"

"Have you? You mean—" She dallied with the impossible problem he was thus presenting.

"I mean—you *cannot* have misunderstood my meaning, this time, even if I am usually so deplorably indirect. I mean, will you marry me?"

She stared at him for a moment and then burst into unexpected laughter. His brow darkened with anger.

"Forgive me," she pleaded contritely, when her mirth had subsided; "I really couldn't help it. The way you put it was so distinctly old school and antebellum; it belonged to the times when gentlemen 'paid their addresses.'"

"Nevertheless, it is *my* way. It appears that nothing is sacred from your ridicule. Will you have me?"

The compelling insistence of his inquiry and the dignity which his righteous anger imposed gave pause to her levity, but she evaded a direct answer.

"I was thinking, too, how Jane Austen or Madame d'Arblay would have treated the situation, and a little also of how I should have written it myself."

"Don't write it. Nobody is interested but ourselves. Once more, will you have me, Leslie?"

She answered on an impulse, without a moment's reflection. "No—emphatically *no!* Don't urge it; it's impossible. It would ruin my beautiful career!" Her proud little head took a distinctly upward curve.

"Damn your 'beautiful career'!" he whipped out in an uncontrollable burst of temper. "If you can't think more of *me* than you do of your pen, there's nothing more to be said. My wife—the woman I could love—must be, first of all, a homemaker. Good-bye."

Leslie's violet eyes were now imminent with tears. She realized that Gerald was leaving her in anger, and it came over her suddenly what life would be like without his daily homage—she had grown so accustomed to it. Placing herself directly across his line of exit, she said wistfully: "I suppose you love me, Gerald—a little bit—in a way—don't you? You forgot to say how much."

"Love you? Not at all, at present!"

His eyes glowed with fierce implacability. "Once, perhaps, I did—enough to serve and suffer, hope and wait, if need be. But that is past, and, besides, it was 'obvious and conventional,' and therefore doesn't matter. Pray don't let it disturb your 'career'!"

"I'm very sorry," she said gently, recognizing the futility of argument.

He departed without further ado.

III

WHEN Margaret entered, a moment or so later, she found Leslie in profound thought, staring vacantly out of the window with her hands clasped behind her. Leslie did not speak, and it struck Margaret, when she turned finally, that her manner was almost hysterical.

"My critics are coming, Margaret—all of them!" she said excitedly. "See, they are nearly here! Be good to them—that's a dear—and send up a pot of that fragrant Assam tea. Don't forget the toast and jam sandwiches. Tell me, is my hair just right? I want to look very pretty, you know. How is my color—too pale or too red? Do you think yellow is as becoming as pink? There is still time to change."

Margaret sighed. She could not conceal her disappointment.

"You are always charming, dear. I would not have you change anything—in your *appearance*, but I did hope that Gerald might have persuaded you to alter—something else."

"Oh, don't mention that obnoxious subject again!" Leslie broke forth passionately. Then, with sudden repentance, she added: "Never mind, Margaret, dear; some day you shall have a little pulpit all to yourself, and you shall preach and preach. I shall build it for you on a high, high mountain—so high that nobody but yourself can hear what you are saying; you shall represent Individualism for me. But I shall be very lonesome when those days come and shall not worship you then as much as I do now, because you make me so happy and comfortable and unharassed to do my work."

As she spoke she turned again with a perplexed frown to look out over the snow, where the human figures approaching loomed black against the prevailing whiteness. Margaret placed her hands on Leslie's shoulders and gazed beyond her toward the setting sun. Then she kissed her on the back of the neck and again on the tip of the ear. There were tears on her eyelashes. Leslie turned quickly and seized both her hands.

"Oh, Margaret," she cried, "such a wonderful thing has happened to me today! I scarcely knew what to think of it! Gerald has just told me that he loves me—*loves me!*"

"But surely, dear," answered Margaret, who, womanlike, had melted at the very word of love, "that could not have surprised you very much!"

"Why, yes, it did—the certainty of it. Of course I have always known it vaguely—as one knows the Beatitudes, for instance, something memorized long ago—but when he spoke, Margaret, it seemed to set into vibration an entirely new chord, a whole train of untried emotions—oh, I cannot explain it, but everything is different! Isn't he beautiful, Margaret, with his limpid eyes and marvelous hands and voice, like a strong young river god—so fearless and honest and brave and sincere and true!"

"Yes, he is all of that."

"And do you know, his words have swayed me in a measure—it is like illumination! I feel that my arguments are all futile before the verities that he stands for, and I am wondering—"

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him no, emphatically *no*; and now I'm afraid that I shall repent. In fact, I've already done so. Suppose he should never come back? He is going to India soon. Oh, Margaret, that would be too terrible! I could not endure it!"

She laid her head on Margaret's shoulder to hide the dropping tears. At this moment the clangor of the knocker on the entrance door resounded through the house, and Margaret started to leave the room.

"Don't forget the toast sandwiches," Leslie called after her. "And let us

agree never to discuss our little point of difference again. I really cannot change that ending—it was all settled last spring, when I first planned the story, and one's original conception should remain. All the same, your opinions delight me, for they show that controversy, which gladdens the hearts of the booksellers, is inevitable!"

Morley, the publisher, was the first of her guests to arrive. As he entered, he offered her a perfect crimson rose swathed in green tissue paper.

"Like the beauty and fragrance of your mind," he said with a gallantry that was reminiscent of the days of compliments and queues. "Wear it for me."

"No, no, good friend," protested Leslie, "you would not have me set a red, red rose against my yellow draperies, surely! I'll tell you: it shall bloom alone in a vase in my Maeterlinck corner, to be near the master mind who wrote 'The Life of the Bee.' That will be fitting. I could not show you greater appreciation, could I? Now tell me—how fares the book?"

"Famously. The advance orders are coming in with a rush. I have fixed all the principal critics, and the small fry will follow the procession. We are preparing a second, much larger, edition. In another week you will find yourself the storm center of discussion."

"Good!"

"That last chapter was a positive stroke of genius and bound to provoke discussion. That's what we're dying for; it's dollars in our pockets. Anything but the dead level of passivity."

Smiles irradiated Leslie's face and she infused an element of additional cordiality into her tones when she arose a moment later to greet the incoming rector.

"Ah, Mr. Wolcott, it was good in you to come today!" she exclaimed, as she fluttered toward him.

He was followed into the room by Margaret, preceding a servant bearing a tea tray, and the quiet little study took on an air of festivity at once. Depositing her tray on the table, the maid lighted some yellow candles in a quaint

old candelabrum that accompanied the equipage, and the scene became a function.

"Not entirely in your honor, by the way," Leslie explained buoyantly. "One must have something special in flowers or lights to signalize one's thirtieth birthday, you know. It marks an epoch. Last year—you remember, Mr. Wolcott—you read me an original poem, but today I perceive you've brought me something quite different. Curiosity consumes me—what can it be?"

"Open it and see," he said with all the indulgence one might extend to a child, and acknowledging the presence of Morley by a hand-grasp of clerical cordiality. His fine, ascetic face glowed with expectancy as she unrolled a small bronze urn from its wrappings.

"What does it mean?" she queried. "This is one of your riddles, I'm sure. A casket, perhaps, containing the certified promise of your flock to read 'The Underbidder,' or a receptacle for my dead hopes and lost illusions. Looks a trifle funereal, doesn't it?"

"Merely an incense burner, dear lady, wrought by a cunning Japanese," he replied, "which I, the humblest of your worshipers, offer as a symbol on the birthday of the greatest worshiper of symbolism. As to my congregation, everyone is on the *qui vive* for your book, and impatient of your publisher"—with a graceful handwave toward the corner. "Their local pride is aroused. Doubtless the missionary societies will prove very helpful because your principal character is 'in the field,' so to speak."

"How extremely nice!" murmured Leslie.

"You, Mrs. Hallowell," he continued, turning to Margaret, "who have been my right-hand adviser in many times of parish stress, must know how much I appreciate their zeal and coöperation."

Margaret nodded and continued pouring the tea without reply.

"Speaking of incense," remarked Morley, sniffing the air, "it appears that some precedent adorer has already left his smoke about your shrine. I must say,

en passant, that I approve of his brand—of incense."

Margaret hastily passed him a cup of tea to divert his attention, but Leslie, with uncompromising frankness and a mischievous smile, handed her cigarette case to the rector, uttering a suggestive "Have one?" which shocked the older woman perceptibly.

The rector shook his head indulgently and replied:

"My dear Miss Bayard, you are the spirit of modernity!" Then, pointing his fingers together in priestly style, he added moralizingly: "All flesh is weak; even a priest must acknowledge the allurement of a pipe. Humanity, it appears, may be divided into two great classes—those who smoke and those who fulminate against it."

"And whose vaporings end in smoke," added Morley.

Leslie tossed her cigarette case on the adjacent mantelpiece.

"Shall we swear off—on this important anniversary?" she queried quite seriously, thinking of Gerald.

The great Persian cat, aroused from his slumbers on the leopard's shoulder, stretched his back into a Japanese bridge in front of the fire, and ended his gymnastic exercises by leaping toward his mistress's yellow lap, where he curled up for another long nap on her accordion-plaited draperies. She stroked his ear with a jeweled finger, whereon a long amethyst set in old silver caught the firelight gleam in purple dashes.

Just at this moment, Theodor Ravelle, known in the theatrical world for his success as a manager, large, imposing, well-fed, opulent and typically French, obstructed the doorway with his bowing presence, and because he was so very near-sighted, Leslie hastily dislodged the cat to give him greeting.

"You see," she said, leading him forward, "my favorite chair is for you; I renounce it for nobody else."

"Would you abdicate your throne so lightly?" he inquired with stagy gestures. "Here where you hold court, here where you evoke the majestic thoughts that stir us all—the tremen-

dous human dramas that arouse the tears and laughter of a—a—a—universe?"

"Then it is—a go?" she queried, overcome with excitement.

"Oh, unquestionably! I have brought the contract to sign. The rehearsals will begin at once."

She clapped her hands together in a childish ecstasy and cried out: "Now all of my ambitions are realized! Isn't it glorious—just to be alive, when one can work and achieve? How much each one of you has helped me! I am ready to faint with joy!"

Margaret turned a crimson face toward the men. Her feelings could be suppressed no longer.

"You call it 'helped,'" she burst forth; "but I call it 'hindered.' I do not see, gentlemen, how your consciences ever permitted you to give her such ill advice. The story is incomplete, either as a novel or a play—you must all have admitted *that* when you read it; then, why, I ask, did you not tell her the truth?"

"Oh, Margaret!" deprecated Leslie quite petulantly. A moment of dead silence followed, where nothing was heard but the purring of the big cat on the leopard skin and the roaring of the fire in the wide chimney. The first to speak was the placating rector.

"Naturally, from your standpoint, Mrs. Hallowell, the story does leave something to be desired, for no doubt everyone with romantic tendencies will experience a sense of genuine disappointment that two such congenial souls could not have been united in the holy bonds of matrimony sanctioned by the Church; but, for my part, I am content to let such a subtle thinker as the authoress"—waving his hand toward Leslie—"kill or marry the people she has created as she may think best. She is never conventional, and therefore her people could not be."

"But the people who will buy her book and read it are conventional enough for the most part—remember that," objected Margaret, "and she should not offend their reasoning powers. Then, why, in the name of common sense—"

"Just one moment, Mrs. Hallowell!" put in the soothing voice of Morley. "Let me explain that the book will be on sale within a week. The fickle public, after all, is the final judge, and no power on earth can predict how it is going to accept any work of art. I propose that we await developments, and that we agree to meet here in special session one month from today to discuss how it has been received. There would still be time to insert a last chapter in the second edition, and so please everybody's taste. You may recall, Mademoiselle the Authoress, how I demurred over that ending once upon a time, and how, with your usual skill, you argued me out of my commercialism."

"And *you*," insisted Margaret, turning toward Ravelle, "were you, too, argued out of your worldly wisdom by a subtle woman? Did you not remember the advisability of always sending away your audiences with smiles on their faces rather than with glum looks or interrogation points in their minds?"

"Madame," he answered, bowing suavely and setting down his cup, "it is the province of the adroit dramatist to make something from nothing. All I need is clever dialogue. That Mademoiselle Bayard has supplied. I can easily build the rest."

"My Master Builder!" quoted Leslie, waving her jeweled hand toward the sky.

Margaret's vexation now overstepped her self-control.

"You are perfectly insane—all of you!" she cried. "And I've no patience with people who—" But she could not finish, and to save her credit as a hostess she burst from the room overcome by her tempestuous emotions.

"She cannot see it as I do," Leslie explained hastily. "She does not appreciate that if my book stands for anything at all it is for a principle."

"Exactly so—quite right—quite right!" they all concurred applaudingly, as they rose to make their adieux. Ravelle lingered longer than the others for the signing of the dramatic contract and to smoke a cigarette—also, incidentally, to kiss the fingers that had held the pen.

He flattered himself in the belief that eventually he should win that pretty little hand for his own.

IV

EXACTLY one month later the coterie met under similar conditions, except that the snow had vanished and the shrubbery was in masses of glorious bloom across the new green grass that spread away under Leslie's windows. The birch log blazed no longer, and Omar purred less noisily on the Persian prayer rug that adorned his mistress's domain than had been his wont on the familiar shoulder of his dead feline relative. Everywhere there were roses and lilies sent by a host of admirers, but, by a strange contradiction, Leslie herself was not *en fête*. She was all in black, and her yellow locks were guiltless of even a jeweled comb, her fingers *sans* rings. The wreath of laurel which crowned the brow of the bronze head of Maeterlinck looked shriveled and neglected. There was even a suspicion of dust on the dictionary.

Margaret, on the other hand, was radiant in white with a pink rose behind her ear. She disseminated gaiety as she talked across the tea table. All her clouds had been dissipated in the assured certainty of Leslie's unqualified success. She was visibly rejoicing that she had been denied the opportunity of saying, "I told you so."

As Leslie's three friends came in one by one, they divined her temperamental change, and therefore each endeavored to second Margaret's efforts in adding a forced gaiety to their prearranged meeting. It was Ravelle who arrived first.

"It is really a hit," he said, bowing deferentially over Leslie's hand, "as I predicted it would be—that bulldog pertinacity of mine permits no such word as 'fail'—but it has required almost superhuman exertions. We eliminated the problem and made it straight melodrama, and the *première* at Syracuse brought out curtain calls galore for the star. Rest easy, therefore; all is well. You shall have my box for the

first night in New York, and make a brief but telling speech in response to an ovation."

This appeal to Leslie's imagination set her laughing. "Can't you all just *see* me doing it—in a yellow velvet princess gown and a white, willow-plumed chapeau!" she said, bowing to the plaudits of a supposititious audience with her old-time debonair gaiety.

It was in this same spirit also that she greeted the belated publisher.

"You, too, bring me good tidings, I hope, Mr. Morley?" was her smiling inquiry.

"The best in the world," he replied—"despite that stumbling block of the *finale*. Everyone says we made a mistake artistically about that, but what do *we* care, so long as the curiosity of the public to read '*The Underbidder*' is simply stupendous? Our presses running night and day cannot begin to fill the demand."

Leslie turned her head away with a queer expression, which the incoming rector caught and failed to understand.

"And you—what have *you* to tell me?" she asked anxiously, her violet eyes strong upon him.

"Dear lady, it is all right—now," he replied a trifle apologetically. "Everybody is reading it, and with profit, too, I think—yes, I may safely say with profit. But I've had a great time with the missionary societies. They balked because your heroine seems to lean a little too much toward the Methodist or Baptist persuasion—but that's a mere bagatelle, not to be regarded in the least. I myself have bought six copies to send away to distant friends."

"A full half-dozen! How generous!" murmured Leslie with a *soupcón* of irony.

"Yes, I thought you'd appreciate it," was his complacent rejoinder. "Some of them may even write helpful reviews in their local papers. Every little bit counts! A bit of bolstering may be necessary, I fear, in missionary circles, even if the presses *are* kept busy supplying the worldly minded."

Leslie could not conceal her chagrin. Her lip stiffened, and she stood before

them white and defiant, angry gleams sparkling from her eyes. The little figure in black, whose pallor increased momentarily, appeared suddenly to loom taller and assume unwonted dignity.

"The bolstering you mention will hardly be necessary," she said, addressing the group. "If my book—which was written for sinners and saints alike to read—cannot stand on its own merits, then let it go to the wall. I am weary of the very name of it. I have stood hitherto for woman's individualism, but I stand for it no longer; I am a deserter. I realize now, as I have never realized before, that I have made a grievous mistake. My imagination was unlimited, but my knowledge and discretion did not correspond, and I regret that I builded with confidence on a false foundation."

They were almost too astonished for words, but Morley became their spokesman and inquired pertinently:

"Why this sudden change?"

She lifted her hand as an indication that she had not finished speaking.

"Listen to me! We have reached the crossroads, you and I, where our paths must separate. After tonight, it is probable that I shall see none of you ever again—"

They came toward her clamorously.

"Please—please, do not interrupt me. I wish to tell you that since our last meeting my whole point of view has entirely changed. I have come to appreciate that, when all is said, there is only one thing in the whole world worth possessing—"

"And that is—money, of course!" said Ravelle.

"It is neither wealth nor art nor ambition, although each is a blessing in its way, but it is—love, mutual love!"

"It has never been denied you," murmured the rector almost inaudibly, but she went on without heeding.

"I thought that I wrote wisely and well when I made my heroine renounce the call of love to devote herself to good works—to follow her individual vocation, as guided by the inward voice. It was false—*false*, I tell you! There is *no* vocation for women save one; and those

who evade it, its claims and duties, have lived in vain!"

"Many women do—and yet are happy," interjected Morley. "You portrayed exceptional conditions, remember!"

She paused a moment with her hands tightly clenched and her eyes cast over their heads toward the distant sunset hills.

"This is my confession—my swan song. Hitherto, I have dwelt in the valleys and listened to the undertones—but the music of the heavenly spheres can only be heard from the highest mountains. I thought ambition could lead me there, and so I clutched it to my breast and followed; but suddenly I awakened. It was as if I had turned a corner and the scales had fallen from my eyes. A blaze as of noonday illumined my soul, and I understood. I knew then that Love can never be the underbidder; he must always stand for the ultimate heights, whether he comes disguised in rags or with a king's crown on his head; he is paramount—supreme, and when he has claimed us we are his willing slaves forevermore."

If Leslie had planned a great dramatic *coup* her climax could not have been more electric in its effects. Bewilderment and surprise were depicted on the several faces of her auditors, and each began to wonder if perchance *he* might be the lucky man. Margaret alone looked serene and sympathetic.

"Now, indeed, I appreciate," she went on, "that I have presented a picture to the world which was vitally opposed to reason and fact. I was ignorant of the initiative, the exaltation of such passion as I had attempted to depict—my own experience for the past month has fully demonstrated that, for I have had a revelation. Subjugated by this old, but ever new emotion, I am on the heights—exalted, in an ecstasy of self-effacement, my whole being suffused with a divine sympathy that demands the recognition and support of the beloved object. Without that object I was only an entity floating through space, unattached, impermanent; but when my Other Self had spoken, I was drawn

by invisible bonds—I could not resist. My heart tells me that I cannot live without him—I cannot longer work without him. He has become the sun of my days and all the stars in heaven of my dreams; and now I know that women are built that way—there is no individual life for them when love has come, and it is because love has never really come or has gone past them that they *ever* advocate the individual life. It is all a mystery; we are only parts of the whole—halves, if you like, but the sense of our dependency is irremediable and the encouraged growth of centuries. Believe me, the pendulum will never swing but one way. There is for us no life, no work, no purpose apart; and that is why I say that I have a real message to deliver to women—to beg them to dissipate their restlessness, seek contentment in the simple joys of home and heed not the dangerous lure of ambition. Before I go, however, I want to make my position very plain to you, who have been my friends and advisers. I shall write a sequel to 'The Underbidder' and I shall amplify that last chapter into the truth. Never again, perhaps, in this incarnation, shall we exchange ideas, you and I, as in the past, because, after the brief ceremony tomorrow—which you, Mr. Wolcott, will be asked to perform—"

"Ah—the ceremony of holy matrimony!" murmured the dazed rector, rising halfway in his chair, and pointing his fingers in the approved "Dearly beloved" manner.

"I shall be sailing with the man of my choice to live abroad indefinitely. We shall visit the far countries together, and, please God, if I can compass it, all our dreams shall come true. Our lives henceforth will be far too short to complete such a beautiful romance as has come to us so unexpectedly."

Ravelle gave a Mephistophelian smile and interposed: "They all say that—on the stage!" while Morley breathed the phrase, "Conventional rubbish!" *sotto voce*. Leslie, however, was too much wrought up by her own eloquence to notice or pause.

"Forgive me, my friends," was her

valedictory, "if I've caused you any misleading impressions, through ignorance. As I said before, we have reached the crossroads, and our paths must separate henceforth. I thank you for all past kindnesses, and hope that the future may bring you only blessings. Adieu!"

Before they could divine her intention she had vanished and the closing of a door in the room beyond came like a positive knell to their ears. Ravelle turned to Margaret with a white face, having recklessly encouraged himself in the thought that if her play were successful she would listen to his suit.

"What does it all mean?" he queried. "I must see her again!"

"But, gentlemen," replied Margaret, applying her hospitable arts to offers of tea replenishment, "what more could you have to say than has already been said? I will convey any messages you may desire to send her."

The rector and Ravelle arose simultaneously to make their adieux, the latter still glaring at the door through which Leslie had disappeared. Morley, however, lingered, abstractedly stirring his tea.

"Could I, do you think," he asked Margaret—"could I have just five minutes' talk alone with her? It is really most important!"

"You heard her parting words, Mr. Morley," was her reply.

"But this is business—not sentiment. I want to secure the refusal and serial rights on that sequel of hers."

"Impossible. In her immediate future she is going to *live* stories, not write them. She is on the threshold of a larger life than when she wrote '*The Underbidder*'—than any woman can ever know alone."

"Mere sentimentality and rot! She will come to her senses!" he declared disgustedly, giving the lazy Omar a kick *en passant*. "Convey my congratulations to her, and say that if ever—But never mind! Good night!"

V

SCARCELY had his footsteps died away outside, and Margaret disappeared to

pursue her housewifely cares incidental to dinner, before Leslie came dancing in through the portières like a tricky elf, dragging a smiling Gerald by one finger. Through one of those sudden transformations of mood and costume which were her characteristic delight, she was now all in filmy white with a bunch of honeysuckle at her belt, a single spray nestling in her yellow hair.

"Get out of the way, you lazy old Omar!" she cried, in glee. "Make a servile obeisance to your gracious lord and master, O most unworthy of Persian poets!"

Omar rose, stretched himself in his Japanese-bridge manner, looked from one to the other with that untranslatable wisdom of cathood, turned around, licked his chops, straightened his whiskers, then settled down onto his new Persian rug with luxurious unconcern and promptly went to sleep again.

"Omar is a sly old diplomat," laughed Gerald. "Wise enough to know when 'two is company and three is none,' even if the third one, being a cat, be not worth counting."

"My cat not worth counting?" objected Leslie. "Beware how you malign him; his claws are dangerous."

"Nevertheless, Omar has been the underbidder in this little game."

"He can bid high—when he's tempted, can't you, Omar?"

"When the game is worth the candle, no doubt—or the fish. He likes fish, doesn't he? All cats do. But what I especially admire in Omar is his Machiavelian manner. He has supervised our entire courtship, and kept the secret like a gentleman."

"Which betrays his Persian blue blood," returned Leslie. "However, that's one of the first privileges of being dumb. Shall we not take him with us to India?"

"Better bequeath him to Margaret—who hates him so tenderly. Mice and sparrows may be sacred out yonder, and our honeymoon must not be shadowed by any such tragedy as the passing of a Persian poet from starvation."

A CONFUSION OF GUIDEPOSTS

By ELLIOTT FLOWER

BE good and you will be honest. Great! Fine! No doubt about it. You can't be good without being honest. A wonderful truth! And yet, when you come to think of it, rather silly. It tells you nothing that you did not know before; it emphasizes nothing of value; it is purposeless.

The Road to Success has some millions of signs that are just as senseless, and every week sees a few hundred more put up. We are all in the sign-painting business to some extent. The less we know about the Road, so far as our personal experience is concerned, the more feverishly industrious we are in putting up guideposts for others. Some of us have been successful in absolutely nothing except erecting guideposts that confuse the wayfarer, but we *think* we know the Road and how to travel it. Anyhow, we pretend we do.

Go slow.

That looks good. Haste has given many a man a fatal fall.

Do it now.

That also looks good. Delay has been as fatal as haste in quite as many cases.

Be sure.

That looks even better, but is it possible? The "sure things" often go wrong, showing that they are not sure, and the man with "an outside chance" frequently wins. And even if it were possible, is it always wise? The man who tries to be sure very often finds that someone who is willing to take a reasonable chance has cut in ahead of him and secured the prize.

Business is no more an exact science than is war. Both are games. So is life. There is no game worthy of the name that can be played successfully by

ironclad rules. It ceases to be a game when that is possible. There may be a few general rules of broad application that will be of value if used with discretion, but they must be adjusted to circumstances. The game is never played twice alike.

Nevertheless, we go on devastating our forests to provide paper for the reams upon reams of advice that we are passing out to each other. Advice-giving has become a profession—or a confidence game; sometimes it is hard to tell which. Occasionally it would justify prosecution for obtaining money under false pretenses. Some men and women draw salaries for writing platitudes and calling them great truths.

I concede the value of a true story of how an obstacle was overcome or a certain man achieved success. This may be instructive, if you have the wit to apply it to your own situation. You may evolve a rule or a method of procedure from it that will be of advantage to you, but you must do it yourself. No two cases are exactly alike, and you alone can adjust the moral of this story to the particular circumstances of your own case. It is unlikely that you can win by doing exactly as the other man did; it is unlikely that even he would do exactly the same thing in the same circumstances again, for a game is seldom won twice in just the same way.

That is where our professional advice givers make trouble—not so much as they would make if most of us took them seriously, but still trouble. They evolve a specific rule from this story; then they give the rule and tell the story to illustrate it. They undertake to apply this rule to our affairs, of which they have

A CONFUSION OF GUIDEPOSTS

no knowledge, and to which we alone can successfully apply any rule. The next week or month they have another story of success that suggests a conflicting rule, and they cheerfully give us that.

Time was when the guideposts on the Road to Success were at least hand-made, but we sadly realize now that most of them are turned out by machine. There could be no such output otherwise.

Some years ago man laughed in his superior way over the columns upon columns of advice relating to all matters within woman's especial domain. All publications devoted to the affairs of women and all "Woman's Departments" in other publications were, and still are, full of it. Every feminine problem was put up to the editor, or, if not, the editor solved it anyhow on general principles. He and his assistants passed out recipes for the happy home; they gave rules and advice covering every topic suggested and many that were not suggested, and anything that they overlooked received attention from volunteer correspondents. Love, courtship, marriage, entertaining, dress, child-training, household economics—they were all settled arbitrarily, and nothing was left to the judgment of the individual woman, unless she happened to become confused by conflicting rules and had to choose between them.

It was all very amusing to man. He read, "It is not good form to let a young man kiss you unless you are engaged to him," and laughed uproariously. He passed on to, "The water for the baby's bath should never be so hot that it blisters him," and laughed some more. It was highly diverting. But the wise man no longer laughs; it wouldn't do, for the advice factory has opened a men's department that is working overtime. He may not patronize it as assiduously, for it must be admitted that men do not seek the advice givers as women do, but it is turning out an even more ridiculous class of goods.

As previously stated, anybody can give advice, and most of us are doing it. The less successful one is, except in giv-

ing advice, the greater is likely to be his success in that line. I have tried it myself. I once wrote a most convincing article on family finance, proving conclusively that anyone who worked and planned wisely could not only get along but get ahead. I do not take all the blame for this, for it was instigated by an editorial offer of cash. Nevertheless, I did it, and the article was so convincing that it convinced me. I decided to get rich myself.

Later my wife ran across the same article, and it convinced her. There were reasons by that time why I did not intend to let her see it, but some enemy or fool friend called her attention to it.

"Let's try it," she suggested.

"I have," I replied.

"I don't see that we are any better off," she complained.

"We are not," I agreed.

"Then the advice is no good," she remarked, disappointed.

"Oh, it's good enough for some people," I maintained, "but it does not fit the conditions in our case."

A friend of mine also read and was convinced. He likewise tried it. Since that time he has not spoken of or to me except in scurrilous language. He has so far forgotten himself as to say that I am a conscienceless and irresponsible word slinger. Yet I misled myself as much as I did him.

Another friend of mine tried another system. Thank heaven, I was not responsible for that. He told me about it later.

"It looked good to me," he said, "and very simple. All there was to it was a system of special funds—a routine house fund, a clothing fund, a rent fund, a coal fund, a miscellaneous fund and a reserve fund. You figure out the proportion of your income that should go to each, and then you divide your money on that basis. Thus you know exactly what you have for each purpose, and you are also building up a reserve that can be invested when it reaches a proper total."

"And it didn't work?" I queried.

"It did not!" he declared emphatically. "It might have worked in some

cases, but not in mine. My income is irregular. Some months it is good; some months it is poor; and some months it is very poor. I struck a lean streak soon after I got my funds started. The proportion table I had worked out gave me just a dollar and fifteen cents for living expenses for the family, and I had to borrow from the rent fund to enable us to eat and pay the cook. Then the rent fell due, and I had to sack the clothing fund to make up the deficiency, after which I dug into the coal fund to buy the children shoes and wiped out the reserve to buy coal. The financial depression continued until every fund owed every other fund and no fund had anything. An expert accountant couldn't have straightened the matter out. Then I threw my books in the fire and made a fresh start on the old basis of using the money in hand for whatever was most needed at the moment."

I should have been tearfully affected by this tale of woe, but I was not; I gloated, for my own experience had been somewhat similar.

"The trouble is," my friend went on impatiently, "that most of these advisers base a rule of general application on some little cross-section of life. It's about as sensible as trying to clothe a regiment with uniforms for which only the drummer boy has been measured. The adviser measures himself or some inconsequential friend and then passes out to you and me a hastily made suit of advice based on these measurements. Most of them are not competent tailors, anyhow."

"Think not?" I queried.

My friend snorted. "Say," he exclaimed, "I've just been looking up the record of a man who makes his living by telling farmers how to get the greatest profits from their land. He writes most convincing articles, too."

"Well?"

"Well, I find that he inherited a good farm and lost it all through ignorance and bad management. Oh, it makes me tired! Words, words, words, more words and then the same words over again—silly words, too, in most cases."

Let's see about that! Let's scruti-

nize some of the more numerous of the guideposts along the Road!

Pay cash.

Good! The man who pays cash will never have any bills—nor any credit. Most of the business of the world is done on credit, and a good line of credit is a valuable asset—but no matter. Pay cash! Never owe anybody a cent.

I have known men to make credit purchases as a matter of business policy when it would have been more convenient to pay cash. "The man who pays his bills promptly," explained one of them, "stands better than the man who pays cash; and credit, wisely used, is a distinct advantage."

Pay cash, of course! It's the only sure way, according to the guideposts. But did you ever hear a self-made man tell how he acquired his first modest home? "Yes, sir," he says, with pardonable pride, "Maggie and I determined to quit paying rent. We wanted a home of our own, and we got it. I'll never forget how proud we were when we first moved into our own house. *But it took us eight years to pay for it.*" Press him and you will find that he did not even pay all cash for the larger house he built later, but put a mortgage on it. And you are quite likely to find, also, that he never would have acquired either place if he had refused to buy or build until he could pay spot cash.

In the smaller affairs of life, are you not always in debt to some extent? Can you escape incurring financial obligations of one kind or another? You owe the gas company; you can't help owing the gas company something—even when you pay the last bill you owe for the gas used since the meter was read. The rent, if you live in a rented house or flat, is an obligation, a debt. You rent by the year, unless you live in a tenement, and, so far as indebtedness is concerned, you are in precisely the same position that you would be if you bought a piano on the installment plan, with precisely the same chance of running behind if things go wrong. You may also find that some tradesmen make a credit business almost obligatory. The ice-man may have no coupon-book system,

A CONFUSION OF GUIDEPOSTS

may refuse to let his drivers collect, and may render his bills when he happens to feel like it. Semi-annual bills are occasionally the rule. The whole system of business—and this includes household business—among people of any responsibility makes some indebtedness unavoidable and likewise advisable, the guidepost to the contrary notwithstanding.

Never borrow.

Excellent! Anybody can see the wisdom of that, and it is quite in line with the rule previously discussed. But most big fortunes are based on borrowed money, and most large businesses are run, to a considerable extent, on borrowed money.

Let us consider the fortunes first. Read the life of the founder of any one of them—Rockefeller, Carnegie, Vanderbilt, Astor, Armour or whomever you may select—and you are pretty sure to run across some such item as this: "Young Blank now saw his opportunity, but he needed more money. His natural shrewdness, combined with frugality, had enabled him to put aside a few hundred dollars, but it was not enough. He must find someone with sufficient confidence in his integrity and ability to let him have the necessary cash or lose this great chance." And then it tells how he got the money on his unsecured note—heralding this as a great achievement—made a success of the venture and sailed merrily on to fortune.

Great rule, is it not? Never borrow! Then you will never have to repay, but, on the other hand, you will never achieve the success that the use of additional capital might give you. Search for a fortune or a great business that is not partly based on the use of borrowed money, and the eye strain will take you to an oculist before long.

Nor, in business, does this use of borrowed money cease when the first struggle is over; on the contrary, it usually increases. Great firms and companies are constantly borrowing money. The bonds of a corporation represent borrowed money. The note brokers are busy placing the notes of concerns that need the money for the conduct of their

business. It is part of the business system. The merchant can make a profit in excess of the interest charge on borrowed money, so he borrows it. In effect, he is renting it for use, just as he might rent additional delivery wagons if increased business demanded the use of more than he owned, or additional floor space if he saw profit in it.

Keep your credit good.

Sure! Good credit is available capital when properly used. But does not this guidepost conflict with the preceding ones? Are they not pointing in opposite directions? If you pay cash and never borrow, of what use is credit to you? And how are you going to keep it good if you haven't any? But perhaps this is merely an intimation that you are not to rely too implicitly on the other guideposts. You will find lots of such intimations along the Road to Success.

Obey orders.

Why, yes, of course. Discipline is as necessary in the business world as in the army. The private who thinks himself wiser than the general is courting trouble. But sometimes circumstances make him the better judge.

I recall the case of a young man who was sent out on the rather difficult mission of finding and interviewing a fugitive from justice. The fugitive was supposed to be trying to reach Canada by way of the Great Lakes. After the young man had spent all the time and money that his employer thought justified, he was instructed to come home. He wired for more time. "Come home!" was the peremptory reply. Instead, he tore up the telegram, kissed his job good-bye, chartered a tug and took a last desperate chance. The next heard from him was when the long-sought interview began to trickle in over the wire. He received substantial recognition for that disobedience of orders.

Another case of direct disobedience was so flagrant that the boss did not wait to voice his displeasure by mail but sent the burning words by telegraph. He was sorry later, for he had to retract.

Almost any man of practical experience can recall numerous cases where

deliberate disregard of orders has been followed by success, and many more where it has been followed by disaster. Also, many a man has subjected himself to censure by obeying orders instead of using his head when a nearer view or unforeseen developments changed the aspect of a situation.

Stick to your job.

A neat and impressive guidepost! Lots of men have gained success by sticking to a job, and lots of others have won by changing. It depends upon the job, doesn't it? Not the immediate cash, of course, although that is not to be altogether ignored, but the job itself, your fitness for it and the future possibilities.

Spend less than you make.

Certainly. A percentage of everything received should go into the savings fund, which should be sacred. That's the way to get ahead. But a good many incomes are uncertain and irregular. What then? Are you going to dig into the savings fund to feed the family when your receipts reach absolute zero and remain there for a time? Well, rather! And how about the first money you receive after a protracted stringency? Are you going to put the regular proportion into the reserve? Not likely. The dry spell has left you with needs that call for every penny of that money and then some.

The man seeking the Road becomes impatient—not with the guideposts themselves but with the sublime egotism of the irresponsible parties who are putting them up. Each man is so arrogantly certain that the last one he erected shows the way unerringly! It does not. Even the man himself does not know the way. He may have traversed it, which isn't likely, but he cannot prepare a route map that even he himself could follow successfully a second time. How, then, can he do it for another? He may make helpful suggestions, but he can lay out no certain route. The man who wishes to make the journey would better study all the maps and then lay out his own route according to his own best judgment, holding himself in readiness to make radical

changes upon a moment's notice. Practically all the maps and the million or so guideposts, many of the latter duplicates in all but the color of the paint, have some value, if you accept them as landmarks rather than as guideposts and figure out your own course accordingly, but they are altogether misleading in their aggressive assumption of infallibility.

One would think material success an exact science. It is not. No formula has ever yet been devised that promised even a reasonable certainty of bringing the same result twice in succession. If one had been, it would have been patented long ago and sold to a syndicate of men so rich that they didn't need it.

The advice of an expert on any matter concerning which he is posted is of distinct value, but generalities, based upon this or that experience, are usually misleading or confusing. The truthful story of a successful man or a successful enterprise, or even of a failure, may be helpful, but no outsider can successfully apply the moral of the tale to your affairs or mine. Besides, mighty few successful men ever tell even their biographers the whole truth about themselves or their affairs. Like a man of whom I read recently, I am still waiting to learn how most of them bridged the gap between their first modest savings and the considerable capital that they possessed a few years later. We are always told how they saved the first few hundred dollars, and in the next chapter we find them with twice as many thousands and no information as to how their capital was so suddenly and tremendously increased. That biographically blank period always annoys me; I can't help likening them to the prestidigitator who pretends to tell you all about his trick but carefully omits the one point that is the real key to it.

However, even the incomplete story should be and may be helpful if you have the wit to apply it. Tell me how a certain thing was done and I may get some benefit from the tale, but *you* can't reduce that tale to a rule to fit *my* affairs. Some thousands of people seem to think they have the superior wisdom neces-

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sary to do it, but they are entitled to two more guesses. It is and must be a matter of individual discretion based upon personal knowledge of conditions.

Most of the alleged guideposts are merely landmarks, and any worthless

thing, even a wreck, may be a good landmark. Of the few that, pointing the Road in only the most general way, are acceptable as guideposts, perhaps the best is: *Use your head!* If your head is no good you have no chance for success, anyhow.



HOWARD—Did you telephone Mrs. Howard that I would be detained at the office until midnight?

OFFICE BOY—Yes, sir.

“And what did she say?”

“Said she didn’t blame you—she had made an engagement to go to the theater tonight herself.”



CRAWFORD—Do you really like to please your wife?

CRABSHAW—I can’t say that I do, but I’ve found out it’s the best plan.



MR. RENO—Do you believe in a uniform divorce law?

MRS. NEVADA—Let’s see the uniform.



THE man who laughs at his troubles deprives his friends of the satisfaction of laughing at him.

THE PRINCESS IN THE TOWER

By SARA TEASDALE

THE PRINCESS SINGS:

I am the princess up in the tower,
And I dream the whole day through
Of a knight who shall come with a silver spear
And a waving plume of blue.

I am the princess up in the tower,
And I dream my dreams by day,
But sometimes I wake, and my eyes are wet,
When the dusk is thick and gray.

For the peasant lovers go by beneath—
I hear them laugh and kiss—
And I forget my day-dream knight,
And long for a love like this.

THE MINSTREL SINGS:

I lie beside the princess's tower,
So close she cannot see my face,
And watch her dreaming all day long,
And bending with a lily's grace.

Her cheeks are paler than the moon
That sails along a sunny sky,
And yet her silent mouth is red,
Where tender words and kisses lie.

I am a minstrel with a harp;
For love of her my songs are sweet;
And yet I dare not lift the voice
That lies so far beneath her feet.

THE KNIGHT SINGS:

Oh, princess, cease your dreams a while,
And look adown your tower's gray side—
The princess gazes far away,
Nor hears nor heeds the words I cried!

THE PRINCESS IN THE TOWER

Perchance my heart was overbold;
 God made her dreams too pure to break.
 She sees the angels in the air
 Fly to and fro for Mary's sake.

Farewell. I mount and go my way,
 But oh, her hair the sun sifts through!
 The tilts and tourneys wait my spear;
 I am the Knight of the Plume of Blue.



ANNE HATHAWAY'S GARDEN

By ELIZABETH MINOT

WHEN Shakespeare would a-wooing go,
 Through lane and woodland roaming,
 Methinks for him the merle trilled low,
 The stream with sweeter song did flow,
 While daffodillies, quaint to see,
 In yellow gowns, danced on the lea.
 Fair daffodils!
 Then primroses and cowslips pale
 O'erhung the brook and starred the vale,
 And violets in purple hue
 Beneath his eye drew life anew,
 When Shakespeare went a-wooing!

When Shakespeare would a-wooing go,
 Within her twilight garden
 Should not the faint musk roses know,
 And eglantine the fairer blow?
 Did rosemary "Remembrance" cry,
 With fragrant breath as he passed by?
 Sweet rosemary!
 What whispered lavender and thyme
 Of sunny days and wedding chime?
 What secrets told the breeze that day,
 That echo still from far away,
 Of Shakespeare and his wooing?

OVERHEARD AT THE ACADEMY*

By MAY ISABEL FISK

MY dear, I'm *so* sorry—have you been waiting long? . . . Not really? Isn't it a shame! But you know I simply couldn't remember whether you said be here at half past two or half past three, and I thought if I got here at two-thirty and you weren't waiting I would surely think you weren't coming at all, so if I got here at *three*-thirty there couldn't be a mistake. Besides, that just gave me *two* minutes to pop in and have my new foulard tried on. My dear, Juliette is a beast—first she kept me waiting fifteen minutes, and then I was one solid half hour standing, while she fitted me. But I knew you wouldn't be cross, for you are just the one woman I know who never gets disagreeable if you are kept waiting a few moments.

Now, Edith, dear, I'm going to pay for the tickets . . . Well, I want to—I shall be so hurt if you don't let me . . . All right, dear, if that is the way you feel about it. I suppose we do need a catalogue—I certainly *will* pay for that—you *must* let me. Oh, dear, isn't that too stupid! I have put my purse in my skirt pocket, and I can't get at it without a little exhibition of my own! Thank you so much—you must remind me to pay you back the moment we get out of here . . . Oh, I insist—I positively insist . . . All right, dear; if you are going to be offended about it I sha'n't say another word.

Heavens—these stairs—they're awful in these new skirts! By the time I get the front foot forward, the hind leg—I don't know any other way to put it—is

bursting out the back seam. Here we are at last—I am out of breath!

Where shall we begin? At the front end and work toward the big numbers, or backward and go frontward—you know what I mean. I usually begin in one corner, look all the way around without raising my eyes, then I go to the middle and look up and down, up and down, in rows—you understand—and in that way I don't miss anything. I made up this method when I was doing the picture galleries on the Continent—I got so I could do any picture gallery, no matter how big it was, in an hour. I'm awfully keen on art.

You would? . . . Oh, you wouldn't? . . . Oh, you would? . . . All right. I think we had better begin by sitting down to rest. I stood so long at that hateful Juliette's my feet are nearly dead. Besides, I have new shoes on, and although they simply don't touch me—I always get them at least two sizes too large—I could swim in them, I assure you—still, we might sit down for a few moments.

What a relief! My dear, you did sit down with a bounce—I believe you are getting stouter . . . No, no, don't be silly—I really didn't mean what you think I meant—I didn't mean you were *really* getting stouter—you just look as though you were. Now, Edith, that isn't kind of you to misunderstand like that.

I'm really mad about art. I think, dear, I'll just slip off my shoes. I can kick them under this bench—only for a moment—and you trot about and tell

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me if there is anything worth looking at. The thing, after all, is to really have been here, isn't it? So few understand the true message art has for us, anyway. It thrills me right to the bone.

What's that? No. 68, "Meditation"—what a curious idea—a donkey looking over the fence into that field of carrots! . . . That is right, my dear; that is right—I looked at the number . . . Well, I can't go over without my shoes; *you* look.

Oh, it's that girl sitting under a tree with a book? Now, really, wouldn't you think they would arrange the pictures so you couldn't make a mistake like that? Nobody seems to know their business nowadays.

. Now you look all over the other side of the room and I will look here—I can see everything sitting—then you come back and describe the pictures to me, and if you think it worth while I will go over and look, too. You had better leave the catalogue—unless, of course, you would like it. If you would, I will go straight downstairs and get another if you say the word. Are you perfectly sure? . . . You are? . . . All right; then I will keep it, for there is no earthly use trying to make out what these things are without a catalogue.

Back so soon? . . . No, I haven't looked at anything yet—I have just been sitting here with my eyes closed trying to think of the exact shade I want for the drawing room paper. I want it all done over—that is—Well, my dear, you never heard me utter a complaint—but there are certain persons in my house—or *his* house, as he is always reminding me—who might be a little more generous with their money. Although, as you know, nothing would make me say one word against William, not *one* word, but when a man begins to make a woman feel that every penny he spends—Well, I am not going to say anything. And particularly when a new paper would be precisely as much for his benefit as mine. And then throwing the new piano in my face every few moments—and a measly little upright one, at that, when I wanted one of those square ones with

photographs all over the top, and a good bit of drapery hanging down. Let me tell you, I have my troubles, although I never breathe them to anyone—which is more than most women would with all I have to put up with. But then, never mind. I shall keep my mouth closed no matter what anyone else would do under the circumstances.

Do go over and see what that pink and yellow mess is in the corner . . . "Autumn Twilight"? Isn't that ridiculous! Who is it by? . . . Oh, indeed, is it? Well, of course when you begin to study it closely you see there is something in it. Quite a beautiful bit, after all. You know, you should really look at the painter's name first—it helps you with your criticisms. But of course I love art for art's sake—I sometimes wish I had gone in for a career of that sort. I once took a course of ten lessons, and I really turned out some rather remarkable things. Not from the nude, you know, or anything vulgar like that, but a very refined little scene—a ship in a storm, with the rain coming down in torrents, and sheep in the foreground—on the beach, you understand—one black. You could almost hear the rain coming down, and you could see the drops way across the room—just as natural—and you could tell the sheep were eating the grass. My teacher said she never had seen anything like it!

Do you know, I think this year's exhibition is even worse than last, don't you? There seems to be a general decline in modern art.

Yes, I suppose we had better move on. I have been fishing around with my foot for my shoe and I can't seem to find it. Would you mind just getting down and looking underneath? Ask that woman to move, will you? Maybe she's sitting over it . . . But it must be; I haven't moved off this bench since we came in here. It must be there—get further under . . . You're sure? Oh, my dear, how dirty you've gotten! What a pity! You know, I really didn't want you—Where can it be?

There, what's that horrid little boy got in his hand? Run after him quick, Edith—it's my shoe! . . . Thank you

so much. The little wretch! Children are so badly brought up nowadays.

I *am* tired—picture galleries are the most tiring things in the world. But then I believe in doing everything conscientiously when you are about it. If you don't mind, I think I will sit down again while you look around.

And just see the way they have these pictures jumbled up—no idea or order in the arranging. If they would have some rule about it—Now a good plan would be to have, say, all the "After the Storm" pictures in a row, and then on top of that all the "Old Gardens." Or, better still, I would put a row of small ones and then the next size on top of that and so on. Evidently no one has considered an idea of this kind.

Now, that portrait of a horse is good—what a lot of atmosphere he has in him! But I don't care for that cabbage field next to him. . . Oh, I think it is—

But it is really never safe to decide what it is without consulting the catalogue. . . . Oh, "A Battle Field." Why, they are not cabbages, but heads! You see, I was right—it's never safe to say anything till you look it up. Well, you know, "what is one man's art is another man's poison."

Do you know, dear, if you don't mind, I think I will run along. I have enjoyed it so much, but I think I have probably seen everything worth while—and I don't think much of that. I *must* have a cup of tea—I would ask you to come with me, but I know you would rather keep on looking. Really, when you have seen one picture you have seen them all, for when you come down to it, there can't be so much difference in them, for when you analyze it it's only paint and canvas, after all, isn't it? Good-bye. I *have* enjoyed myself. Good-bye.



MR. GRAMERCY—My husband is anxious to get rid of me.

MRS. PARK—Don't cry, dear. In that case he won't haggle over the alimony.



WHAT'S to prevent me from kissing you?" demanded the bold lover.

"My goodness!" exclaimed the girl.

But it didn't.



IN love as in gambling the true devotee plays for the game's sake, not for the prize.

MOTOR CAR MAXIMS

By W. W. WHITELOCK

A CHAUFFEUR at the wheel is worth two under the machine.
It's a rough lane that has no scorching.

Be sure there's no policeman in sight, then go ahead.
By their "toots" ye shall know them.
A fool and his machine are soon started.
The slowest way round is the cheapest way home.
Scorching automobiles cast their victims before them.
An ounce of gasoline is worth a pound of push.
An automobile goes out like a lion, and comes home like a lamb—on a tether.
Better a stalled automobile and a contented girl therewith than a dinner at Sherry's
and a lack of attention.



NO TWITHSTANDING woman's readiness to give a piece of her mind, no man who ever endeavored to fathom her mind reported any decrease.



TH E youthful lover who lacks words to express his ecstasy of bliss generally finds an inexhaustible flow at some later day when he has to pay the freight.



TH E optimist pictures love as an oasis in the desert, the pessimist—as a mirage.

ARDEN—THE VILLAGE OF DESPAIR

By HENRY PHILLIPS

GOD knows, if there be a question of right involved in telling the tale, no person holds that right but me; no one's suffering and resignation have been akin to mine—except it be hers, heaven forgive her! Nor is the history more hers than mine. Certain wild nights like this bring it hovering tremblingly to my old lips—for 'twas such a night that began the drama—and dear ones once again take their places about my cold fireplace.

The appalling mystery has hung over the house of Fraling all these years but has been sealed by ominous silence. There have been four rumors, I know, hinting black art and even murder, all of which my spoken word will dissolve like black clouds before the sun. Aye, one name—my own—has itched this many a year on the tongues of a generation of scandalmongers. These I put to shame. 'Tis true I live here a desolate, uncommunicative man, aging rapidly and mourning a loss so sacred and profound that no spoken volumes could make it ever lie less like a corpse next my heart. Tell me—because I shut myself up with my sorrow and barred these sacred walls from curious eyes and salved no itching ears—what then? Have I committed a crime? Those whose memory I've kept were my dead; and she whom I loved but forever lost, she, too, is a thousand times mine—mine alone!

It was passing strange, they say. Even so; it was that and something sadder, but no criminal matter. Judge for yourself.

She was dying; there was little doubt of it. Dr. Canby had given little hope when he left me a few hours before, after staying nearly all the afternoon and doing all that he could. I felt that I should be better contented if I could only get the doctor to visit my mother once more. So I hastily made ready to brave the wild night and go to his house, more than a mile away in the village.

The hot sultriness that had been hovering over us was now being dissipated with terrible fury in a midsummer's storm, which was at its height as I stepped out of the doorway. The warning elements seemed but a stone's throw upward, and ready to crush the puny roofs over our heads with every crash. Vivid lightning luridly pierced the murky night in startling proximity, and a deluge was sluicing every highway and byway. I found the road and sloshed along, stumbling into the swollen gutters at every other step, often compelled to pause for direction until a flash was weirdly reflected in the dull watery sheen on every fence and tree.

Rawlinson's hounds were baying painfully as I passed, which, I could not refrain from thinking, was an ill omen with our simple country folk. It surely sounded like a knell as the notes were carried to my ear through the heavy reeking atmosphere.

After what seemed an hour of plunging through mud and water, soaked to the skin, I reached the doctor's. Bad

news awaited me, for which I did not readily forgive Canby. It seems he was just about to plunge into the foul night himself.

"But, Canby," I cried half angrily, "my mother is dying!"

"I know it, Andrew," he replied in full sympathy, which I little appreciated just then. "I fear my visit could do no good."

"My God, Canby! Do you mean to tell me you won't—"

"I'm sorry, Fraling, but two lives hang on my quick action during the next half hour—young Mrs. Martin and her child. But, stay; I have a substitute—a reliable substitute, Andrew, who will return with you and do as much for your dear mother as I could—until I can come to her."

He indicated a tall figure enveloped in a dark cape standing in the shadow. I glared at it, and at length discerned a girl, in whose face was the most mysterious and tragic look I had ever seen. The long cape she wore was wet and bedraggled with mud as though she had just come in, and she shivered as the wet garments swayed against her. Her eyes were large and luminous. There was something about them that from her first beseeching look ever haunted me: it was a look of world weariness, as though they knew of a secret burden that could never be shaken off and were peering into the unknown for relief. So keen evidently was her desire to help me that she stretched forth a hand in mute appeal. As she let her arm fall, my eyes were attracted by a heavy black silk bag suspended from her wrist. For some reason I could not take my eye from it at once; it fascinated me.

"This," continued the doctor, "is the daughter of John Trevelyan; we worked side by side in the clinic for years. She is a nurse; take her with you, Andrew, and I'll join you as soon as possible."

I nodded to the girl to follow me, and filled with terrible apprehensions at this loss of time, I strode fiercely out into the night, again hoping against hope that I should find my mother alive.

The fury of the storm had abated; the rumbling thunder was less distinct, and

silver-tongued lightnings played around the far edge of the horizon, where inky clouds were rapidly crowding away toward the east. A struggling moon began to silver the clearing sky, and here and there timidly appeared a blinking star. Nature's mood was changing from despair to hope, and, strangely, so was mine. But I only plodded along the more quickly, the girl keeping up with the pace to which hope spurred me. The only sound which broke the silence was theplash of our footsteps and the resonant croaking of thousands of frogs in the meadow. They seemed to cry, "Come quick! Come quick!" And as I passed Rawlinson's kennels, I noticed that the hounds had stopped their ominous baying.

Soon the two lights from mother's bedroom window were burning bright holes in the gloom, and old Nan still stood before the bed with hands clasped and eyes bent upon her mistress. I made a dash for the door, quite forgetting my companion in my eager desire to reach the room upstairs and learn the worst. When I turned at the door of the sick room I was surprised to find the girl beside me. How she reached the landing so quickly and quietly I never knew. Her large eyes were fastened on the scene before her, the wasted woman with glowing cheeks and closed eyes, but a shadow against the snowy sheet, the rigid form of grief-stricken black Nan. As she looked, her sympathetic face grew sharp with pain, and turning, she gave me a look which was all compassion, yet seemed to say: "I can save her!" She moved quickly toward the medicine table, with no sound save the dull swish of her soaked skirts, and I thanked God that she had come.

II

My dear mother did not die. Her recovery seemed something of a miracle, but if brave, unmitigated diligence counted for anything, then she owed it entirely to Muriel.

One thing, however, I noted with growing alarm as the weeks sped by; it

was the vital place the girl had come to fill in my mother's life—the girl had *become* her life! Muriel would leave us occasionally for a couple of days at a time and just so long did mother languish. I saw that eventually this girl *must* be persuaded to remain with us.

As I said the night I first saw Muriel, the pall of some deep mystery seemed to envelop her in a cloak of sadness. It shone from the depths of her great dream-swept brown eyes and forbade the outsider to intrude—that was the point that troubled both mother and me; we felt that we must ever remain outsiders. Or, if ever we should penetrate the veil, the conviction was strong within us that we were destined to find Muriel no longer ours and a loathsome something there. The girl was battling with some monster, I could see that, and some closely veiled sorrow was gnawing at her heart. Strangely, these signs of distress, which were especially apparent by day, were in a measure dissipated by night when she joined mother and me at the fireside. Regularly after supper she would spend a half-hour or so in her room. She had left us weary and sad, but joined us again in buoyant spirits, as though she now saw before her a renewed aspect of life.

It was in this elevated mood that Muriel introduced beautiful Arden to us, and a new chapter in our lives was opened. By day we lived on our little farm here, but by night we dwelt in Arden. Yes, that village behind the hill became ours, indeed, its inhabitants our neighbors and Muriel's friends our friends. We would have recognized the sharp white wooden spire of the little church anywhere, and we knew the very odor of coffee, tea and kerosene in the village store.

Mother and I had never heard of Arden, which was not to be wondered at, since we were not a family of travelers and had scarcely been five miles away from our little farm. It was unlikely even that many of our more itinerant neighbors in the sleepy village knew of it, for one must go to Hinsdale by railroad and thence to Arden, since it lies three miles beyond, just behind a rugged

hill—Sugar Loaf Hill, they call it. I think I could have found the way from Hinsdale station to the village behind the hill blindfolded in those days, so familiar did Muriel make each step of the way. And as for mother, she made so many inquiries about Arden that Muriel was importuned to supply infinite details. Why, mother knew every house by the roadside; she knew which one of Sallie Purgeon's three children had its face glued to the window as she had descended the Trevelyan steps! I am afraid that mother, in her anxiety to show her unflagging interest in Muriel's affairs, plagued the child, judging by the strained look that came over her face as she replied to some of her questions. Mother even went so far as to send knickknacks to Muriel's mother and toys to the Purgeon children, waiving aside the girl's protestations. And as I saw Muriel return from Arden each time more haggard and careworn, I hated and feared the village behind the hill, and felt that in it lay a sinister sorrow that was at length to envelop us all.

As we sat around the great fireplace the ruddy glow sharply lit up mother's wrinkled features and softly shone in Muriel's great eyes, as she stared and stared into it as though a great vista lay spread out before her, while her fingers worked deftly at her knitting needles. I smoked musingly, looking at Muriel a while and then at the flying sparks. It was a tremendous idea that had occurred to me—but so simple. It was merely a plan to keep Muriel with us always. But it seemed so big and I was slow, so time must pass until it became ripe enough in my mind to pluck.

At length my mind was made up, or perhaps I should say my courage had risen to the sticking point, and one afternoon—Muriel had been with us nearly a month now—I found her alone in the garden. As I approached her the thought of all that depended on her answer oppressed me with horrible dread. She, too, seemed to scent an impending crisis from my manner, and received me with mute alarm instead of her usual gentle greeting. I addressed her ab-

ruptly, though with no little perturbation.

"Muriel—you must not leave us; you must not—it would kill mother!" This was far from what my heart was bursting to say; but she looked much relieved at once and smiled in her sad way.

"Andrew Fraling! How you frightened me with such a sinister expression on your face! You made me fear that you had come to tell me"—she hesitated and her face flushed—"that I must leave—or—worse."

The declaration I wished to make was made a greater hardship.

"Muriel," I blurted out, and something in my tone made her turn pale and shudder, "oh, Muriel, can't you see—I want you to stay! I want you to become my wife, Muriel!"

Now it was out, the words came more easily, and I stepped nearer and took her hand, and was shocked to find it inert and cold. "Can't you see, child, how easily this settles the whole vexatious question? It is so simple. Mother needs you, and I, I tell you, Muriel, I must have you! And you—what about you, Muriel? Let me hear you say you, too, would be happy!" I pleaded, for again that veil of mystery had settled down between us; her eyes were filled with it; her face was blanched with pain and she stood as though struck a violent blow. In pity and despair I dropped her hand, hurt in not comprehending. It was fully a minute before she seemed able either to speak or even to know what to say.

"Dear, dear Andrew"—I trembled at the words—"if my heart and soul were my own I should this moment be the happiest woman in the world, but to take things as they are—which we must, Andrew, we must—your words have made me the most miserable woman."

"Muriel!" I cried at this stab. She stepped closer and laid her chilled hand on mine, and I looked and saw tears glistening in her eyes, which now looked so weary and impenetrable.

"No—no, Andrew, you do not, you must not understand; the fault lies with me!" with a bitterness of tone I had not thought possible.

"Is it a fault, dear?" I asked reproachfully. "Or is there another—love?" It was so hard to say that word.

A look of anguish tinged with shame—I knew it was shame, and for a moment it stunned me—came into her face. She studied a second before she spoke.

"It is both, Andrew—only worse—many times worse; it is not only a fault and a love—it is a sin and a passion!"

The words burned my ears. Then I cried out desperately: "But tell me this, Muriel, before God—tell me truly—do you love me?"

I saw her battle with the mysterious influence; I saw her close her eyes and lift them toward heaven as though making a sacred appeal; I saw her nails dig cruelly into her pretty pale hands; then she shuddered violently, and I saw that the struggle was over. I waited what seemed many minutes for her to open her eyes; they sought mine, and in that fleeting moment I saw the mystery in them was gone; and I sprang toward her and had her in my arms and kissed her before she could struggle loose as though she had been stung by a serpent.

"Why—oh, why did you do that, Andrew?" she panted tearfully, now more than ever the woman of mystery.

I could not utter a word, so great was the shock I sustained at this violent repulse. This odd encounter had made a curious disclosure, however, which aroused my compassion, and I chose this awkward moment to speak of it.

"I confess, Muriel, I don't understand. Forgive me for what I have been guilty of. Only tell me it was not my rudeness that made those dreadful bruises on your arms, dear!" Her loose sleeves had slid up to her elbows, and on both of the soft arms were many cruel bruises, as though made by strong fingers—or gashed by sharp fingernails, as my anger made it appear later on.

My simple words had thrown Muriel into even greater confusion, and she regarded me with a searching look of fear.

"No, no, Andrew; of course you did not make those marks," she said hastily.

"Then who did?" I could not restrain my anger and indignation.

"There, there, Andrew," she said soothingly, and there was a wan smile on her lips; "those bruises were made by hands—hands that have bruised my soul far worse, Andrew."

I thought I saw a chance to suggest her rescue, though her tones of resignation had well nigh chilled me.

"My hands would never bruise you, Muriel, never—I would have them cut off first! Don't give yourself to me now—but can't you take me some time?" I pleaded tentatively.

She paused as if considering my proposition and then said resolutely:

"Andrew Fraling, I shall choose between you and—and my other love—tonight. If I choose you, I shall come to you at once when I return. If I choose the other, I shall return—but never, in the name of your love for me, speak of it again."

"Very well, Muriel," I said resignedly.

"Don't judge me too harshly, Andrew," she said, now in soft pleading tones. "My position is a trying one—for both of us. I know that, dear—but I am to blame. Good-bye, Andrew, until tomorrow."

She was going to the village of Arden. I knew it as well as though she had told me. She had often mentioned the Purgeon young man next door. My jealous heart that day began to wrestle with sinister thoughts.

III

THERE was no doubt of the result of Muriel's decision. It was negative. Furthermore, a decline in the girl's health dated from that day in the garden and with it came a gloom that wrapped all three of us in its dark folds. When I tell you that we never saw a bright day again—not even I, though I am now past fifty—you will know the sort of gloom I mean. As for me, my heart sank every time I saw my Muriel's pale and haggard face, which reproached me for my attempt to lift the veil. Both mother and I had failed to make the girl one of us.

Muriel now left us more often than she used to, and she was changed for the worse after each visit. I noticed the change first in her great brown eyes, which were actually losing their beautiful depth of tone. They looked so world weary, and a tendency to dream which I had always noticed had become habitual. Heavy dark rings, too, had begun to form under her eyes, which gave them a cavernous depth. Her cheeks sank daily, and hard, cynical lines formed about her mouth. Even her voice had in it a note of deterioration and helplessness. Oh, Muriel, how you tore my heart, which would have laid itself mangled at your feet to have seen you yourself again, though destined never to be mine! Yet I felt that I alone was not responsible for all this woe—I knew as well as though she had told me that the source of it all lay yonder in the village behind the hill. The hatred that had been smoldering in my heart now blazed with intensity, and I longed for a power to raze the hateful place—Purgeon, Trevelyan and all.

As Muriel languished, so did poor mother, whose life and health reflected and hung upon hers. Doom seemed hanging but a short way above us all.

One evening we sat by the fire as usual—except that mother had not yet joined us. Both of us dreaded being left alone nowadays. I resolved to pluck out one of the thorns in my flesh. She had implored me not to speak, but I still felt there must be a way.

"Muriel," I said gently, and her hands set a-trembling violently and played nervously with the black silk bag, which was never absent from her wrist.

"Well, Andrew?" There was an assumed hardness in the tone.

"Five weeks ago—" I began.

"Andrew, why will you torture me? I have made the test—it can never, never be." Every syllable was a grief-stricken reproach, and I felt it keenly. "There is another—stronger tie." Again the bitter, cynical tone.

"Yes, Muriel," I said as smoothly as I could, and trying to give the appearance of calm resignation. "Those ties

are in Arden?" I could not help adding.

"Arden!" She fairly spat out the word, as though its loathsome name were alone the cause of all our sorrows. She, too, hated the place, and, strangely, I felt a little glad.

"Your parents, perhaps," I pursued, impelled by I know not what impulse except despairing love; but it seems I struck fire.

"Oh, Andrew, please, please do not ever speak of them again!" she begged.

At once I pictured the clue to the mystery, which I then and there resolved to pursue in the near future if matters did not mend.

It seemed to me as I went to bed that night that I had a pretty serious score to settle with this village behind the hill. Evidently there was a break somewhere, and it lay for me to bring about a reconciliation, or—well, my love for Muriel was strong enough to make me kill her persecutors.

IV

THE week that followed is one of black memories. Muriel's condition rapidly became alarming, and I began to fear that the poor girl was surely becoming demented from the pressure of the unseen causes. Often I heard strange mumblings in her room at night. And I could hear her bare feet pacing up and down, sometimes far into the morning. She was unfit for any exertion, but went listlessly about her duties, nevertheless, no murmur passing her pale lips. Our little home was like a rudderless vessel those days, over which hung the black, portentous clouds of some relentless storm.

Our evening gatherings were pitiful affairs. One phase of the appalling mystery, however, had become more noticeable than ever. When Muriel came downstairs after the habitual séance in her room, she seemed sustained; color returned slightly to her cheeks; her hands trembled less, and her eyes were fired with a semblance of their old-time brilliancy. I was sul-

lenly jealous of this secret power or person or whatever it might be that gave her seeming pleasure and renewed her strength. Her memory was failing woefully, and her mind seemed in a fever and wandered more and more. Simple facts were interwoven with highly colored threads of wildest fancy. It was pitiful to hear her ramble on with strange bits of conversation, but as these seemed her only pleasure, I listened in sullen silence. She spoke of some of the places she had visited during her absences, places which I assure you never had existence outside of some gifted Arabian Nights; she wove romances about the simple town and folk of Arden which I knew were too gilded for those simple folk to have experienced; she mentioned simple things she had done about the house which we knew were the merest fabrications.

Late one Friday night, after our usual evening by the fireside, I was so wrought upon by Muriel's strange actions and obvious misery that I took a turn down the dark road, hoping for a few moments of clear thought to give me guidance in our sore straits. I decided then to wait another day, hoping against hope, before taking drastic action. This resolve calmed me somewhat, and I was quietly ascending to my bedroom, when Muriel's door was thrown violently open and the girl appeared. A wrap was thrown about her head and shoulders, as if she had hastily prepared to go out of doors.

Never was there a picture to strike greater despair into the soul of a man. Her hair was roughly disheveled; her eyes were patches of sodden dullness, which had the keenest lust of unappeased hunger in them I ever saw; her lips were dry and cracked, and they moved constantly, forming one word which I could not catch.

"Muriel, Muriel!" I cried in the deepest anguish.

But she, apparently, neither heard nor saw me, and would have passed me hurriedly by had I not seized a corner of the wrap and so detained her. She gave vent to a little cry, more like the snarl of a wild beast than the erstwhile soft voice of Muriel. Then she looked

me full in the face and at length recognized me, though vaguely it seemed, and shuddered.

"Andrew Fraling," she said ominously, "if you want to see me kill myself before your eyes, detain me, that is all! I say detain me—or follow me!" she added as an afterthought.

I said not a word. I saw, at least, that she was sane, and no hand in God's world could have deterred her from her fell purpose, whatever it might be, least of all mine. Least of all mine—that was the drift of my failing senses. Then I heard her open the door, and her voice came to me as if many leagues away.

"Andrew Fraling, may you and God forgive me!"

V

SHE did not return, although I waited through the whole long night.

In the morning mother found me, where Muriel had left me, on her way downstairs. She gave a little startled cry as she looked into my face. The night's drama must have eaten its way deep into my features and left its acid mark.

"Where is she?" she queried with a tremulousness that foreshadowed her fragile strength.

"Gone, mother. Gone into the night from where I got her."

She tottered, and but for the narrow balustrade must have fallen down the steep stairway. I was still too pain-wearied and dazed to have saved her.

"Andrew," she whispered huskily, "you must find her—you *must!*"

And I saw that she spoke truly. If I failed, the look of doom I saw in my poor mother's eyes was certain of fulfillment.

Of course, I had but one place in mind in which to pursue a search—that was the village of Arden. I found that there was no train for Hinsdale for three hours, so I willingly trudged six miles to the junction where I could get one an hour sooner.

From Hinsdale every foot of the way was as familiar to me as the paths about

our own little farm. Yet I hesitated in my purpose as a sudden strong aversion came over me toward lifting the veil to the village behind the hill, for I knew in my inmost soul that there I should expose the pitiful skeleton that dangled in Muriel's closet.

But in the next moment I hesitated no longer, for on looking down, I saw the imprints of a woman's shoe freshly made in the dew-sprinkled dust of the path and leading straight for Cradle Rock!

Refreshed by this hopeful sign, I sprang into a half trot, and could not refrain from an exclamation of pleasure when I saw, but a few rods ahead, the great white rock shaped like a rough-hewn cradle, now dazzling in the morning sunlight. I began at once to clamber up it, and near the summit found a place quite smooth, as though worn so by human agency. I had no doubt that this was the spot where Muriel often came and sat. To one side of this smooth place was a deep cleft, which was cluttered with rubbish. I went closer, and involuntary tears sprang to my eyes as I saw there the various trifles my kind mother had sent with Muriel; there were the titbits for the Purgeon children—bright-colored toys now washed pale by many rains—and other tokens of kindness, equally decayed. I paused a few seconds sorrowfully perplexed. Then with wildly beating heart I turned, still reluctant, to take my first view of that dreaded village beyond.

That which met my eager eyes made me gasp from sheer amazement, as though I were in the clutch of an impossible dream. Then hot anger shot through me.

Dazedly I closed my eyes to test their truth of vision, but when I opened them and looked again the prospect was the same.

Peaceful meadows nourished by a silvery stream lay outspread; a herd of grazing cows in the foreground, with here and there a straggling clump of trees—this was all that one could see for ten miles—except a horizon broken by endless hills. There was not a man-made thing in sight—there never had been! *The village of Arden never was!*

Arden had become more than ever our village of despair—always hers, now ours.

I put my hand to my eyes and mechanically scanned the scene with some hope of seeing the beloved figure, which just then I would have pursued a thousand miles. Discouraged, I looked about the rock again, and hanging on a jagged edge I saw a fragment of black. It proved to be Muriel's silk bag, which I had never seen off her wrist. I paused before it with a feeling of dread of further revelations before I thrust my hand into its depths. My trembling fingers

came in contact with a number of little vials together with a cylinder of cold metal. At length I drew one out; it bore a red label with the name of a Hinsdale druggist—below the name a skull and crossbones, and below that—God forgive her! I gave a sob of pity and of a love that will go with me to the grave; I saw I must never find her now—it would have been monstrous for both of us. How gruesomely the marks on her arm explained themselves in that cold cylinder! And those vials all bore the sinister word—*morphine!*



BILLING AND COOING

By JOHN KENDRICK BANGS

IN the days when I was wooing,
All my time was spent in cooing,
Cooing blissfully.

First she cooed and then I cooed,
As the love chase we pursued
In a happy, dreamy mood.
Ne'er a coo from sweet Babette
But by me was promptly met
Cheerily!

Now we're wed, and 'stead of trilling
Little coos we twain are billing,
Billing constantly.

First I bill and then she bills,
Bills for grocers, bills for pills,
Ice and bonnets, duds and frills.
Ne'er a bill from sweet Babette
But must be instanter met—
Woe is me!

There's no joy without its sorrow;
No today without its morrow
With its pain.

Yet with all the woes of billing,
With results so sad and chilling,
And the debt chase swift and killing,
When Babette doth call me to it
I am ready still to coo it
All again!

THE PANIC

By ETHELYN LESLIE HUSTON

AROUND her the Mergenthalers were crashing—a sibilant, insistent monotone, with now and then a staccato note from the stereotyping department at the far end of the great composing room. It was almost midnight, and the dull roar of the city beat with diminishing force against the unwavering roar of the machinery within. Vagrant lights in towering skyscrapers suddenly blinked out, and only the long rivers of street lights, running close to the ground, sent up a dull ochre glow on the starless sky.

The sixth floor of the *Leader* building ran the full length of the structure unpartitioned, except for one corner, which was walled off for the editorial room. With this exception, composing, stereotyping and make-up departments elbowed each other, with no visible boundary line, and out of this seemingly chaotic mass of machines and men the *Leader* issued seven editions daily and a weighty Sunday paper with magazine section, duly colored and glorious.

In the center of the great chorus of Mergenthalers, each with its no less machinelike operator, were two tables with drop lights. At these sat the two proof readers, their heads bowed over the little sloping proof stands, steady pencils moving mechanically down the long sheets, leaving each its train of hieroglyphics on the margin. In front of the readers were large hooks for "rush" and "time" proofs, and without looking up, they leaned forward and thrust the long, fluttering strips of paper on them. At regular intervals these were collected by the foreman, who threaded his way among the

machines, leaving the proofs with their compositors for correction.

From the stereotyping end of the floor came now and then a quick flare of red, a sudden crashing of heavy metals, and then a cloud of dense, soot-flaked smoke rolled lazily over the heads of the workers, causing a scowl or two as the swinging incandescents dimmed, but otherwise unheeded. The stereotypers, broad-shouldered, powerful men, in short-sleeved undershirts open to the waist, black with grime and streaked with sweat, looked demoniacal in the uncanny blending of lights. But as the great hands of the clock neared the figure twelve, one of them lifted a little rusty tin pail and set it on one of the steam tables. As each massive form was lifted on the table, the tiny pail was lifted off by one of the brawny, sweating men, and promptly replaced after the form was removed, to look like a forlorn little derelict on the wide sea of hot steel.

The mellow stroke of a gong vibrated through the pulsing voices of the machines, and at its signal the roar and crash died suddenly to a silence broken by the cheerful whoops of hungry men. A thunder of racing feet sounded down the five long flights of stairs leading to the street, and almost immediately the noise of feet reascending. Editors and reporters sauntered out of the editorial department with sandwiches in their hands and lounged up to the proof tables. The readers had risen, French, the chief reader, hollow-eyed and with a livid streak across his cheek bones, to go to a window, where he leaned out to the cool night air. On

one of the tables sat the assistant reader, Mrs. Thornton, her arms raised as she tightened the folds of a black silk scarf twisted around her head, a protection to her hair that the frequent volumes of soot-burdened smoke made necessary. As she lowered her arms, a begrimed but smiling stereotyper approached, the diminutive rusty pail swung cautiously from one big finger, and an answering smile dancing in the eyes of the woman on the table.

"You blessed boys! You never forget that disreputable little pail of mine, do you?" she exclaimed. The voice was low, weary, but very sweet, as her eyes rested on the blackened and bare-chested giant before her.

"Oh, that coffee is important—it's part of the game," he laughed as he placed the pail beside her and removed the cover so she would not burn her fingers.

"And now, if Mrs. Astorbilt will please preside—" suggested the sporting editor, placing a large apple pie on the table, while a second was laid beside it by the editorial writer.

"I prefer pumpkin," he announced judicially. "It makes me think of the old days on the farm. Where are the carvers, Wilson?"

The foreman came up with a pair of copy shears half as long as his arm and handed them to Mrs. Thornton. Critically watched by the editorial and reportorial staff, she gravely scissored the pies passed to her by those whose turn it had been to tear down to the night lunch wagon on the street, and balancing the pieces on sheets of copy paper, she served the pastry to each hungered maker of history with stern impartiality.

Then Beck, the marine man, with the office towel slung over his arm, presented the tin pail respectfully to Mrs. Thornton.

"Your coffee, ma'am. And it's growing cold while you feed the faces of that bunch of hobos. Will you have terrapin, with spuds *au gratin*, or—er—mince pie?"

He looked at her sharply as she smilingly shook her head.

"Just my coffee, thank you, Jimmy. I do not feel hungry." And a little eagerly she drained the pail of coffee, and then leaned back with closed eyes against a type stand, while the men chaffed each other and discussed newspaper issues.

The fifteen-minute rest was almost up. The inexorable gong would soon sound its note of warning; the crashing and thudding of multitudinous metals would sweep remorselessly and reverberatingly around and over her; the endless galleyes of tragedies and comedies, of pathos and bathos, of all the dreary and sordid and mercilessly bare weakness and shame of the human race would soon flow beneath her straining eyes, a sorry stream issuing from the heart of the big, pitiless city and emptying into the outer darkness of the unknown and forgotten. Her body ached; her head throbbed; hot needles stabbed her closed eyes. In her breast a stone stifled her and her breath struggled fitfully in her throat.

"Sort of petered out, miladi?"

It was Graham, who had the city desk, who spoke in her ear, and her eyes flashed.

"A little tired, yes. But this panic must pass soon, surely, and let us all get back in shape. Where is Staunton, Ed?"

"Driving an express wagon. Jack Blake is waiting on table in a twenty-cent restaurant for his food and tips. And old Grayling is gathering in nickels for the crosstown line. And three more of us drop in the basket Saturday night."

It was all said quietly, tonelessly. The laughter and jesting of the men around them rolicked cheerily through the vast room with its bewildering incandescents and huge, waiting machines. The make-up men were already wiping their hands on their overalls and feeling for their tobacco in their hip pockets. Jimmy Beck was swearing soulfully at Brown, the finance man, who had accidentally jabbed a brush of evil smelling sour paste against his shirt sleeve. It all looked easy and natural, the men calm and care free.

But back of them the woman on the table saw conditions that spelled tragedy.

"Your job is damnable, you know—" It was Graham's voice again in her ear. "As I told you, as things are in this old rat trap of a building, with that smoke factory in the back of the room there, it simply means several kinds of hell. There isn't one of us would hold down that table job for a week. And we feel like curs when we sprint in to look at a proof sheet, and hold our breath till we can get back out of the smoke. Oh, it's—" He ground his teeth suddenly and his plain, kindly face grew grim.

The woman beside him pressed his arm with her fingers.

"We are all taking our medicine," she said with a little smile. "I had quit, you know, this summer. It had always been because I loved to be in harness—loved the absorption of it, and could stop and run away to Maine, to the mountains, to Canada—until this fall. And then the bottom suddenly fell out of my universe, and it had to be harness in grim earnest. And just as the panic struck the country! This isn't my old editorial chair—but it means life for the girl and myself. And I am grateful to think you people here made the opening."

A long, booming note broke over the chatter of voices; a rippling as of steel castanets swept through the room, and with a rhythmic swing the great Mergenthalers woke into life and the diapason of their mighty voices set the walls of the big building vibrating.

Graham looked hard at the white face with its heavily shadowed eyes, but the woman smiled quizzically, if a little wanly, and slipped down from the table.

"Run away, little boys and—Jimmy Beck! Clear those pie crumbs from my proof stand!" she cried indignantly.

"Oh, very well," responded Mr. Beck obligingly, as he gathered up a sheaf of exchanges and swept the crumbs to the floor. "Nice proof stand—nice pie—nice lady! Ta, ta, nice lady!"

And Mr. Beck departed.

One by one the long proof sheets slipped steadily over the table. The foreman passed back and forth, silent, watchful. French, one of the rare expert readers, an encyclopedia of knowledge, terror of even the editorial staff, lynx-eyed, bent lower over the table as revises began to come back. His face was gray-white under the eye shade, but the pencil moved down the papers evenly. He had a wife and three children and a mortgaged home.

Mrs. Thornton worked silently beside him. A vague change in the rumble and swing of the machines, a slight acceleration of speed, a sense of keenly tensed muscle and grim alertness from the rear, where vessels of molten metal were swinging aloft, and huge, sweating figures stepped swiftly and surely from blazing light to half-shadow and back, indicated the approach of the going-to-press hour. The black pall of smoke rolled more frequently through the long room, choking with the fumes of smoldering wool, dulling the light to angry orange, flaking hands and lips and eyelids. Now and then Mrs. Thornton glanced up at the shaded light over her desk. Once she loosened the cord, lowering the light a little. For a few brief moments she covered her eyes with the tips of her fingers.

As the revises began to come back to French she felt, rather than saw, that he several times glanced at her with his keen, sunken eyes.

And as the pounding of the heavy hammers began to signal the locking of the forms, she at last leaned back in her chair with lowered lids and compressed lips. It was no use—the lines were running together in angles and triangles and melting into blurs. The hot needles were stabbing her eyes. She was missing errors, and French was finding them in the revises.

The paper went to press and Mrs. Thornton rose from her chair, each nerve and vein twanging angrily as the long tension suddenly relaxed. She was deadly weary, and leaned gratefully against Graham's firm arm as he piloted her down the five long flights of stairs, through musty smelling gloom

penetrated dimly and at long intervals by a flickering gas jet. When they reached the outer world, dark with the velvet darkness that precedes the coming of the dawn, they turned sharply to the left and walked down the quiet street, passing now and then a loitering derelict, who shrank back into the shadow as they drew near or leered into their faces, sometimes with a sentence of drunken ribaldry, sometimes with an obscene oath. These they passed in silence, both too tired to heed what was but part of that weird weekly trip at four o'clock in the morning.

Once a woman caught Mrs. Thornton by the arm—a bedraggled drab with mud-stained skirts and face still young, but hard with all the knowledge of evil that has plumbed the lowest depths. Graham struck her arm aside and they went on, still in silence.

Presently they reached a flat building, once pretentious, but now left far behind by the uptown march of the residential district. Towering wholesale houses loomed blackly around it, and its one time stately façade was dulled and weather-stained. At the entrance Mrs. Thornton turned and held out her hand.

"It is kind of you to come four blocks out of your way every week," she said.

"My philanthropy is of the boomerang brand—I need the fresh air after a day and night of grind." His kind, tired eyes smiled down at her, and he closed his two hands around her slender gloved one. "Nothing doing in the marriage license line, miladi? How much longer can you stand this sort of thing, Agnes?"

She shook her head and her face clouded.

"Dear and dearest of men, do not—"

With a little pressure of her slim fingers she drew her hand away. And lifting his hat, Graham looked at her with grave wistfulness, then turned and went on down the dark street.

Slowly she climbed three flights of stairs, leaning every few steps against the shabby metal caging of the abandoned elevator shaft. On the fourth floor she

fitted her latchkey in a lock, and entering, closed the door behind her. A turned-down light burned softly in a small, square entrance hall, and stepping to a doorway, she drew a curtain aside and glanced in. By the faint light from the hall she could discern the outflung arms and golden head of a child in bed, sleeping quietly; then she turned and entered another room.

Erected years before, the building had a fireplace in the living room of each apartment. And here a soft glow filled the room, now bright, now dim, from a large pineknot flickering lazily on a pair of brass dogs and sending out a fragrant incense of pine. Dropping hat and cloak on a chair, Mrs. Thornton crossed to a large couch covered by a cassimere shawl, whose rich, dull tones shone warmly in the firelight. Sinking on the couch, she tilted her head far back on the cushions with a long sigh of utter exhaustion. Her arms lay beside her, palms up and fingers curled inertly.

The city's monotone came faintly to the quiet room; the murmur and low chittering of the burning wood sounded close and intimate, and after a while the woman's eyelids lifted and her gaze wandered from picture to desk, from desk to chair. The room was comfortably spacious; good rugs suggested themselves dimly from the floor; several long, low chairs of brown wicker, with cushions of golden brown that blended with walls of the same coloring, outlined themselves, and as the flames lifted, pictures in dark frames—prints, photos, water colors and one or two small oils, each with its own distinct individuality or history—were visible in the golden gloom. Below them low, open bookshelves encircled the room, broken only by a wide desk at one side. On this, and here and there above the books, a gleam of brass reflected the light of the fire.

It was not luxurious, but it was eloquent in every detail of the spirit that makes its own world and steadily bars the raucous turmoil of barter and sale, of feverish ambition and hungry aspiration outside. The reading lamp

at the head of the couch, the stand of books and periodicals beside it, the little earthen jug of ragged, yellow blossoms—all spoke of long and friendly associations, to which the mellow glow and confidential murmur of the wood fire added its benison.

It was her refuge—for herself, and the child in the next room. She was fighting hard for it, but she knew that she was losing. And presently she closed her eyes, burning deep in their sockets, and covered them with her hands.

When MacTague Carren came the next evening, the shaded reading lamp was lighted and the glow of the fire gave a cheerful air to the room. "Bee-bee," as Miss Beatrice Bräme Thornton was called, had just returned from a glorious day in the park, where she had been sent by her mother with the adoring German janitress and was enthusiastic over the menagerie. Curled up on Carren's lap, she gave him invaluable information concerning natural history, breaking off now and then to put him through a sort of third degree as to the habits and habitat of certain favorites of the animal kingdom. Mr. Carren's metropolitan education was a handicap, but his imagination was active, and he struggled gallantly to uphold his reputation for being all knowledge personified. When his hostess announced the hour when properly brought up small women should retire, however, his grief at the separation was not untinged with relief, and Mrs. Thornton laughed at him as he emerged from a strangling embrace and reached for his cigar case.

When she returned he had extinguished the reading light, and with his chair drawn up before the fire and head leaning back, was watching the flames through the smoke of his cigar. Mrs. Thornton stretched herself on the couch, but with her face turned from the firelight and her eyes closed. After a little, she asked, without unclosing them:

"Have you read the leading article in this month's *Review*?"

Carren did not reply at once, but

without turning his head, he intently studied the profile lying on the cushion and sharply outlined against the shadowy background. The rose-leaf bloom of spring had quite died from the face. It had paled, and was touched here and there with shadows. Around the eyes, Life, the inexorable artist, had pressed a bitter thumb, and though the lips smiled easily, the smile faded as easily, and never reached the weariness that looked out always from beneath the drooping eyelids. The slender hand was too slender, and the slim limbs, outlined through the clinging, pale gray folds of her house gown, were perfectly still.

"Well, aren't you growing about tired of this?" he asked, ignoring her question.

Turning her head, she looked at him and smiled.

"This seems very nice," she murmured lazily. "I am quite comfy, thank you, and I have an eminent surgical gentleman, unarmed and at my mercy, to gaze at. The fire is good—the world is outside—and Allah is great. What would you?"

He watched a little ring of smoke drift off into darkness.

"You were married for two years—happily married. You have been a widow for five. You have earned money with your writing till this panic hit the country. The panic wiped out your personal income, as well as your writing. Now you are doing work under conditions that most men would shrink from. And you cannot stand it very much longer."

He sent another silvery ring floating softly toward the ceiling. Mrs. Thornton watched it in silence.

"Thornton was a handsome man," resumed Carren calmly. "And, of course, you loved him. If he had any faults, death is always a sponge that wipes them from one's memory. Far be it from me to recall them, if they existed—but do you think you are wise in rearing around yourself, as a wall, the memory of a dead man? You and I are good friends. We do not always agree—heaven forbid! But we never

know a dull moment in each other's society. Sentiment with me is practically dead. I am driven as by fifty devils, and when I can wrench an hour now and then for myself, I want you. You are the most restful woman I have ever known. You have that wonderful gift of being able to keep silent and keep still. And we interest each other—always. Why do you refuse to marry me?"

Mrs. Thornton looked at him meditatively, a faint, inscrutable smile on her lips. Acutely analytical, she picked up each word, each inflection, and weighed it delicately on the sensitive balance of her mentality. The man before her was the embodiment of strength, spiritual, physical, mental. A little above medium stature, broad-shouldered, with well knit muscles and unusually firm flesh, well groomed, well tailored and generally fit, he was of the type that meets crises with the poise and ease that would almost suggest indifference, were it not for a slight narrowing of the eyes, a slight tension of the muscles around the somewhat derisive mouth.

In his fifty-first year, his face showed few lines to denote approaching age. It was smooth, clear-skinned, clean shaven except for a short mustache, and the eyes were dark, speculative, shrewd and a little hard. He was a man of the world, and his world was a large one. His interests were many, his life crowded, his friends legion, because he was a man of terse but golden speech when called upon at either banquet or clinic. Men honored but did not exactly understand him, and women would have loved had they not rather feared him. The square jaw, generous, but firm lips, and chill, searching gaze, all in turn veiled by a vague, intangible, derisive disbelief, that baffled the curious and abashed the sycophant, appealed keenly to the complex and not always feminine woman who now watched him.

A woman to whom fear, physical or psychological, spoke in an unknown tongue, the dominating strength of the man, together with the aloofness that

barred all but the two or three from the personality behind the suave and silent exterior, struck in her a responsive chord. Strong of spirit, of mind, the frail body that sank repeatedly beneath the whip of her will irritated her, and her weakness sent its quivering filaments, as those of the sea anemone, out to the calm, strong personality that invariably rested and revitalized her.

With the shadowy smile still on her lips, Mrs. Thornton rose from the couch and going to the window, drew aside the draperies and looked out. Through an opening between two tall buildings she could see the long, bead-strung lights bordering the city streets. A blazing sign towered here and there against the sky's dark canopy.

The discordant blare of a Salvation Army procession floated uncertainly from some avenue. Standing there, she pushed back the soft white fichu and pressed her hand against her throat. It ached—as all her tired heart and body and soul ached, she thought. Words of Burton floated through her mind:

Mine eyes, my brain, my heart, are sad;
Sad is the very core of me!

And so had her weariness reached to the core of her being. She had been true to herself, to her delicacy, to her womanhood; and she had fought with brain and body to keep her personality inviolate—to keep her own four walls as sanctuary—to keep her heart a shrine, the world of men shut outside, till the one glory should come to flood it with the warmth and sweetness that the whole aching woman of her prayed and hungered for. To Thornton she had given a girl love, very loyal and very sweet. But he was now but a memory, laid away in lavender with the little laces of her child's babyhood.

She had grown to the stature of womanhood since; the world had opened its scroll to her, and she had found it unlovely reading. The empty lives of the women feverishly seeking pleasure that always eluded them, the callous lives of men, enmeshed in scheming and cutthroat professional and political and business policies, the

hollow sham and Sodom fruitage of it all, she shrank from. The impotence of individual philanthropy, a feather duster against the great sea of human want and misery that ebbed and flowed through the city at her feet, left her soul sick.

She wanted rest, harborage, love—and the man behind her offered her friendship.

Turning from the window, her pale draperies trailed softly behind her as she moved to the back of his chair. Slipping her delicate, nervous fingers down till they interlaced beneath his chin, she drew his head back against the laces of her breast and leaned down till her lips rested on his eyes. Her lips were soft and fragrant, and Carren raised one arm, resting the hand on the bronze hair gathered loosely into a knot at the back of her head. And soon, with a tightening of his fingers, he drew her lips down to his own.

But with a little unsteady laugh she drew away, and sinking back on her couch, she twisted her head far back on the cushions—the habitual move of those who have the nerve pain ever at the back of it—and dropped her wrist over her eyes.

Two deep furrows plowed between Carren's brows, and tossing his cigar into the fire, he leaned forward with his elbows on his knees.

"I cannot understand you," he said slowly. "You are not in love with anyone else. You care for me—or else you are a good actress! The child loves me. And you are yoked to a plow, doing labor that is brutal. Yet you still refuse!"

The lips below the frail wrist were silent, and the man sat staring into the fire. A soft chime from a little desk clock floated through the stillness, and Carren rose and picked up his hat and coat.

"I am sorry. Good night," he said gently, and the door closed quietly behind him.

Pink fingers of light played over the pineknot, and the wood separated with little hushed whisperings. The blare of the Salvation Army bugles sounded

closer, then died slowly away in the distance. The room was very still, and presently Mrs. Thornton slid her wrist down to her lips, pressing them hard. Her wide-open eyes filled with slow, terrible tears, and after a while the tears receded and the eyes were dry. Such are the tears that go back to the heart, searing it with scars that all of life can never wipe out.

The week passed with leaden feet, and again the dreaded Saturday with its all-night labor crushed her down. That morning her trembling knees had refused to support her till she dressed, and the motherly janitress, summoned by the frightened child, made her black coffee, which she drank liberally dashed with whiskey.

Each hour was a long agony, the pandemonium of the crashing machines beating on her naked nerves, an inquisition of exquisite torture. Her head seemed in a metal vise that slowly crushed it, and her eyes grew bloodshot as she strained desperately to pierce the mists of pain and decipher the now meaningless words. Waves of deadly faintness swept over her, and the nausea again caught her throat.

A cloud of the dense black smoke rolled forward and enveloped her. She could not see the proof—she could not see the lights themselves! She leaned suddenly back in her chair.

"God!"

It was a wordless cry, defiant, unbelieving. She held her tortured eyes with her left hand, the useless pencil still clutched in her right. Mr. French's voice came to her as from a distance.

"Mrs. Thornton! There is something wrong?"

"Something—yes," she replied quietly. "I cannot see—the proof."

For a moment she sat there, then rose. She checked French with a gesture as he would have followed, and made her way unsteadily to the cloakroom. One door opened into the editorial room; another led out to the stairway. Pulling the veil of her small black hat about her throat, she twisted her long cloak around her, and groping for the rail, felt her way downstairs.

She did not want people, voices. She felt like a spent animal, hounded to the end of its strength, and like the animal, she wanted to be alone. Her physician and her oculist had warned her, with the usual stereotyped phrases—complete rest, change, no worry. And she remembered them now as she clung to the rail with both hands, feverishly anxious to get to the street—home—to the little, still sanctuary that Destiny was wrenching at last from her.

At the same moment Carren was issuing from one of the hospitals, after a long night in the operating room. His way home led down through the center of the city, and in his closed car he leaned forward on his stick looking out with unseeing eyes at the city streets flashing past him. Presently long siren calls of hurrying fire companies sounded around him, the confusion of running feet, the angry clang of ambulance bells, shouts of warning—and the car stopped with a jerk.

The chauffeur spoke to an officer in a white helmet, and then turned to the surgeon.

"We'll have to go around, sir. It is the old *Leader* building that is burning—"

But with a blow Carren had flung the door back and leaped out. The officer caught him by the arm.

"You cannot pass the fire line, sir." Then, in answer to his quick questions, he related briefly that there had been an explosion from the lower floor that engulfed the stairway—the *Leader* staff had escaped by a rear fire escape—it had given way with some of them—the ambulances had taken them away—the back wall had already fallen in.

And like the booming of mighty cannon, Carren could hear the great Mergenthalers plunging through floor after floor to the basement.

Throngs of people choked the streets for blocks. It was useless to try to learn anything there. And with a stifled oath, that was half a prayer, he turned and gave the chauffeur Mrs. Thornton's address. "And hurry!" he added.

The car cut corners recklessly but miraculously, and swung to the curb in

front of the darkened apartment building. Carren sprang up the stairs to Mrs. Thornton's door and found it unlocked. From the doorway of the quiet room he saw her on the couch, the soft folds of her black gown reaching in long lines down her slim length, a touch of white sharply showing at throat and wrist, the head tilted far back with the white hand, palm up and fingers curled, lying across her eyes.

He lifted her swiftly in his arms and held her close. She could feel the hard beating of his heart against her, and in the firelight his face was livid and drawn, as though from a long illness.

Holding her head back in the hollow of his arm he looked down at her, while the reaction from the agony of fear made the knotted veins on his forehead pulse irregularly.

"I thought I had lost you," he whispered at last unsteadily. "And how I love you, white woman!"

The mask was down; the love she had dreamed of was there. Her eyes, darkly luminous, studied his face in bewilderment. The great strength of him enveloped her and sent a wonderful warmth stealing through her chill, spent limbs. And raising her hand she laid its soft whiteness, with a touch of infinite yearning, on his face.

"And you offered me—friendship!"

His arms tightened as his look searched hers.

"I thought you had nothing else—to give," he said.

She lay back in his arms with a little tremulous laugh.

"Nothing else!" she whispered. "Ah, king of men!"

Her hand slipped back around his throat; his head bent lower till his lips sought and found hers; weariness fell from her as a sable garment, as the love that had been her cross and had become her glory thrilled as molten rubies through every vein.

And behind them, unheeded, the little desk clock chimed a shocked requiem of all the gods of convention. For the hour was five and dawn was breaking.

A BIT OF THE WORLD*

By EDGAR ALLAN WOOLF

CHARACTERS

TRUDIE (*a waif*)
HOLLIS CRAWFORD (*a college student*)

PLACE: *New York City.*

TIME: *The Present.*

SCENE—*A squalid room in the tenements. On the right is a small window, several of the panes of which are broken—old rags and paper are used to keep the cold out. At the back left, two mattresses lie side by side. One is carefully made up, and upon the pillow lies a little doll. There is a dilapidated looking table down right, and two chairs—one with only three legs—are on either side of it. A fire escape is seen through the window, and upon the window sill is a faded rose in a tomato can. There is a broken-down sideboard or a bureau, on the left. The door is at the back on the right.*

At the rise of the curtain, a canary which hangs from a hook on the right wall is heard chirping distressfully for several seconds; then finally it stops.

As TRUDIE enters, the bird starts chirping again. TRUDIE is about sixteen years of age—half a child and half a woman. She is chilled through, and in her hand she carries a small package. She removes the shawl which covers her head and puts the package on the table.

TRUDIE (*to the canary*)

Wait, little feller; you're goin' to get your breakfast; just wait.

(She stands on the chair and talks to him as she unwraps the box of seeds.)

Did you think that Trudie would go back on yer? No, Prince Dickey; dese cost me my last nickel, but I can sing when I'm hungry, and you can't. You men folks need a heap more care and waitin'-on than us women, don't ye? (She fills his little seed cup with seeds.)

There! Lor', but you must be hungry! Ah, Dickey, tell me, are you really a prince, or am I only making it up in my silly, hungry little head?

(The bird starts singing cheerfully.)

Ah, I knew it! I knew it!

(Listening to the bird, and repeating the words she fancies he is saying to her.)

"Trudie, I am a prince, and I'm coming forth some day, real soon, to take you with me to my castle as my bride."

(Closing her eyes in ecstasy.)

A bride! Oh, de joy of being choked wid de smell of orange blossoms and soaked wid gobs of rice! (To him.) God love yer, Dickey! You're de only thing I have in all de world—since Connie's gone—(She looks at the little mattress in the corner.) When I swiped yer from dat swell house after de folks moved out— Oh, it wasn't swipin', was it?

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"A BIT OF THE WORLD"

(*The bird chirps.*)

No. If I hadn't tuk yer, yer would 'a' starved, and den I'd 'a' had no fairy prince to claim me.

(*A little sunbeam enters the room and flickers for a moment on the left wall.*)

TRUDIE (*jumping delightedly down from the chair*)

Oh, good morning, sunbeam—how did you get in here? Why, you haven't been in to see me for weeks and weeks.

(*Delightedly.*)

Oh, look at it dance! Dickey, look! (*She dances a few steps as if to catch it. It disappears.*)

Ah, now it's gone! No bit o' sunshine ever does stay long wiv me.

(*A knock is heard at the door. TRUDIE stands for a moment in alarm.*)

Wait a minute. Wait a minute.

(*She quickly picks up her shawl and throws it over the bird's cage. To the bird*)

Hush now! Don't let no one know I got a prince in my room, or dey'll take you away from me again.

(*The knock is repeated. TRUDIE jumps down from the chair and goes to the door.*)

I'm comin'! I'm comin'!

(*She opens the door, and HOLLIS CRAWFORD, a young college man, enters. He is well dressed, is good-looking and unconsciously makes use of his newly acquired college learning.*)

HOLLIS

Pardon me, but are you Miss Wilfer?

TRUDIE

That's my last name, sir—my first name's Trudie.

HOLLIS

I'm coming to make so bold as to ask you to help me with—

TRUDIE (*incredulously*)

To ask me to help you?

HOLLIS

Yes. I'm preparing my graduation thesis on a sociological subject, and I've come down here in search of some original data.

TRUDIE (*not understanding*)

Oh, you must be mistaken, sir. I ain't got nothin' like that about the place.

HOLLIS (*laughing*)

Oh, you don't understand! Mrs. Jones, who lives somewhere on this floor, gave me your name and told me you might be able to give me some information that would be of value to me.

TRUDIE

Information—

(*She looks toward the bird with a terrified expression, as if she thought he was coming for that.*)

About what, sir?

HOLLIS (*reassuringly*)

About yourself, of course—how you manage to subsist—how you pass your time, and so forth. I'm willing to pay well for anything that will have any bearing upon the theme which I'm treating.

TRUDIE (*aside*)

Gee—he talks like a duke!

(*Reassured that he hasn't come for the bird.*)

You might come in, sir, out of the draught, if you don't mind.

HOLLIS (*coming in*)

Thank you.

(*The door closes with a slam.*)

TRUDIE (*offering him unconsciously the three-legged chair*)

Won't you sit down, sir?

HOLLIS

Thank you— (*He looks at the chair.*) But, really, I'd just as lief stand.

TRUDIE

Oh, excuse me.

(*She gets him the other chair.*)

HOLLIS (*good-naturedly*)

Oh, that's all right. Do you mind if I make some notes?

(*He takes out a pad and starts to write.*)

TRUDIE (*picking up some things lying about the room*)

No, sir, but I wish I'd 'a' known you was comin'. You see, I let all my servants go out for the day—

HOLLIS

Oh, now, don't bother straightening up, Miss Wilfer.

TRUDIE (*as if that name were too much for her*)

Miss Wilfer! I'd like to have you call me just Trudie, if you'd be so kind, sir.

HOLLIS (*laughing*)
Trudie! There! How's that?

TRUDIE (*sitting*)

Heavily! Excuse me, but is it a fairy story you're going to write?

HOLLIS

No, it's to be an exposition of facts.
(*He sits.*)

TRUDIE (*not understanding*)

Oh! I only just asked because I often write fairy stories myself—just in here. (*She points to her head.*) I mean, I make up all sorts of lovely things. Do you ever make believe?

HOLLIS (*with a smile*)

I used to—when I was a baby.

TRUDIE (*with innocent admiration*)

Gee! What a swell baby you must have made!

HOLLIS (*laughing and pointing to the bird cage covered up*)

Pardon me—but what is that?

TRUDIE (*guiltily*)

Oh, that's—that's a sort o' hangin' lamp. I lights it in the evening when I've got company.

(*She balances the three-legged chair. He catches her just in time to keep her from falling.*)

HOLLIS

Company? Mrs. Jones told me you live here all alone.

TRUDIE (*sadly*)

I do—since Connie's gone. She was my sister.

HOLLIS (*writing down the facts*)
Is she dead?

TRUDIE

The doctor said she was. Oh, are you goin' to put Connie in your "imposition of facts," too?

HOLLIS

Yes.

TRUDIE

Oh, I'm glad! (*She shivers.*)

HOLLIS (*with great sympathy*)

You're cold, aren't you?

(*He takes off his coat to put over her.*)

TRUDIE

No, really I'm not—but I always feel sort o' queer when I think o' Connie.

HOLLIS (*as he puts his coat about her*)

What did she die of?

TRUDIE

The doctors say it was something just the same as you swell folks get, but that ain't much consolation to me, sir.

HOLLIS

Do you work for a living?

TRUDIE

Not now, sir. I used ter work in an artificial flower house—you know the flowers your ladies wear on their hats—

HOLLIS

Yes.

TRUDIE

Well, when Connie got so bad I had to stay with her to get her water and things—a kind lady in the factory—Miss Kahn—Do you know her, sir? She squints—

HOLLIS (*smiling*)

No, I don't think I do.

TRUDIE

I thought you might, 'cause she's awful pretty outside of dat one bum eye. I sort o' guess you must know a lot of pretty girls, don't you, sir?

HOLLIS (*laughing*)

Yes, I know quite a few; but (*with mock gallantry*) you'd look just as well if you were all dressed up.

TRUDIE (*pleased as she gets up and throws off his coat*)

Honest? I wish I could 'a' kept that dress I wore last night in my dream. You'd 'a' liked me in that, sir.

HOLLIS (*laughingly*)

I like you in the dress you have on. But won't you tell me some more about Connie?

TRUDIE

Oh, excuse me, sir! Why, when Connie got so bad, Miss Kahn let me

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take the work home. Some nights I stemmed as many as a hundred roses—oh, such lovely, real-looking roses—they almost seemed to breathe out a perfume—just like that bokay over there. (*She points to the faded rose in the tomato can.*)

HOLLIS

Why did you give up the work?

TRUDIE

Well, after Connie left me, the doctor burned something in here “to make it nice,” he said, and it spoiled all my roses; and when I took ‘em back—I lost my job.

HOLLIS

Haven’t you been able to get another?

TRUDIE

No, sir. Oh, and I was so happy making them roses! It’s grand to make something, ain’t it, sir? To see it shape itself and grow—even if it’s only a *make-believe* something. I felt just like a mother to them roses.

HOLLIS (*writing*)

Just a moment! I’d like to take that down verbatim. (*She looks puzzled.*) Your mother and father are dead?

TRUDIE

Mother is. We ain’t seen father for years and years. He came from *your* world, father did.

HOLLIS (*affected*)

Poor little girl! Will you let me give you something for this information you’ve given me?

(*He takes out his purse and hands her a bill.*)

TRUDIE (*rising and speaking with feeling*)

Ah, no, sir, please—don’t spoil it all. I was just commencin’ to feel as if the stories I’ve been dreamin’ and makin’ up might some day come true—and now you spoil it all by wantin’ to pay me. Ah, why did yer do that, sir?

HOLLIS (*rising*)

Because you’ve helped me; now I want to help you. It’s nothing but right I should pay you. That’s business.

TRUDIE

Yes, *business*—but I don’t want this to be business between us. If it’s busi-

ness, when you’ve paid me and gone, then it’s all over.

HOLLIS

Well, what is there I can do for you in return?

TRUDIE

Answer *me* a few questions—about *your* world. I ain’t never had a chance to talk to no one like you before.

HOLLIS

Well, I don’t think I’m different from any other fellow. What do you want to ask me?

TRUDIE (*ingenuously*)

Are you married, sir?

HOLLIS (*laughing*)

No, not yet, thank you.

TRUDIE (*pleased*)

Honestly? (*He shakes his head and laughs.*) I suppose you think I’m very silly, but I remember mother tellin’ us that she never found out father was married to someone else till after both Connie and me was born. Do you go to school, sir?

HOLLIS (*laughing*)

Why, I told you I’m just about to graduate from college.

TRUDIE

Oh, did you? It must be lovely to know things. Father was eddicated, too—but I ain’t inherited none o’ his learning.

(*The sunbeam enters again and flickers about the room. TRUDIE runs after it in delight.*)

Oh, there it is again! Look at it, sir—that’s twice it’s been to see me today. Oh, if I could only lock it in wiv me—just you and me and the sunbeam—wouldn’t that be grand, sir—you and me and the sunbeam? (*It disappears.*) There! It’s gone again. (*He looks at his watch. She puts her hand upon him, half afraid.*) Must you be going, too?

HOLLIS (*putting on his coat*)

Yes; I’ve got to be up at college in a half-hour.

' TRUDIE (*coaxingly*)

Ah, couldn't you stay here, instead?
I'll tell you some of my stories if you do.
(She guilelessly takes his hand.)

HOLLIS (*aside*)

She's an ingenuous little mite. Well,
I'll have time to listen to one if you
hurry.

(*About to put down his hat.*)

TRUDIE (*tenderly taking his hat and putting it on the table.*)

Thank you, sir. Oh, might I just
touch your hair? It looks so slick and
nice.

HOLLIS (*laughing*)

If it will act as a sort of inspiration to
you, go ahead and help yourself.

(*He humorously bends his head for her.*)

TRUDIE

Thank you. (*She runs her hand over
his hair and a thrill of rapture goes
through her.*) Oh! (*The music of a
street organ without is heard.*) Oh, that's
me orchestry—I allers starts it playin'
when I has company!

HOLLIS

Fine! Now go on with the story.

TRUDIE

All right, sir, but you mustn't laugh.
(*She sits on the floor and speaks as the
organ plays a sweet air outside.*) Once
upon a time a bit of the world done
somethin' wrong, and the Great Father
above, who keeps it turning round and
round, got so angry at this bit of the
world that he broke it right off and threw
it way, way down in the mud. Well, it
stuck there for years and years, always
tryin' to get out of the mud and join the
rest of the world—the real world. But
each year it seemed to settle down deeper
and deeper into the mud, and very soon
nearly everyone on this bit of the world
grew discouraged, and they all gave up
hope, and became satisfied to stick in the
mud. All but one little girl; her name
was Rags. She never gave up hope, sir;
oh, she dreamed and imagined so many
things in her little hungry head! And
she longed to meet and touch someone
who belonged on the rest of the world so
far away. So one day she imagined

and hoped so hard that she jumped right
out of the mud and off the bit of the
world onto the rest of the world. But
when she got there no one would have
nothin' to do with her. They said: "If
you want to work we'll let you scrub our
floors, but you must scrub them for less
than anyone on our world will do it."
And so she scrubbed floors and did other
things for which the people paid her, but
no one ever gave her the least bit of
sympathy or love—till one day she saw
a little bird, who sang at her from its
little cage the prettiest little song, and
she felt that he didn't care what world
she came from; so she bundled his little
cage in her arms and dropped off the
real world back to her bit of the world.
But the shock was so great that it
changed the little bird into a beautiful
prince. And the bit of the world sud-
denly became a beautiful land all of
flowers, with no wire stems but real
stems and real perfume. And in this
land everyone welcomed her with love,
for there everyone is equal. That's
only one of my stories, sir.

(*The street organ stops.*)

HOLLIS

It's a very pretty story, and, strangely
enough, in spots it's not unlike something
that occurred to us a while ago. After
we moved out of our old house my
mother engaged a little girl from the
streets to scrub the floors. Our little
bird, through some accident, was left
behind, and when my mother's maid
went back for it it was gone. The little
girl had stolen it.

TRUDIE (*her head falling in shame*)

Oh, Lor'!

HOLLIS

Of course, she didn't get her pay for
scrubbing the floors, but we wouldn't
have lost that bird for any money.

TRUDIE (*pathetically*)

And if you'd ever meet that little girl,
I suppose you'd hate her, wouldn't you?

HOLLIS

I'd tell her she was a little—

(*The bird commences to sing under the
shawl.* TRUDIE starts, then falls and

A BIT OF THE WORLD

covers her face with her hands. HOLLIS crosses and pulls the shawl off the bird.)

HOLLIS (*reproachfully*)
You lied to me.

TRUDIE
No-no-no-no, don't say—

HOLLIS
This is our bird—you're the girl who took it.

TRUDIE (*hysterically*)
Yes, I stole it, if you want to say so, sir. But you might be a little easy on me. It was a living thing placed right in my hands. I thought if I left it there in that empty house it would 'a' starved—I've gone without food to feed that bird. I love it, sir—more than anyone ever loved a bird before; it means so much more to me, sir. (*She has taken it down.*) What are yer going to do with it?

HOLLIS
Pay you for keeping it and take it home.

TRUDIE
You're going to take him from me? Oh, think, sir, what that means! He's all I have in the world after you go, and I'll never have nothin' else.

HOLLIS
Nonsense. (*Somewhat tenderly and consolingly.*) Every girl in every walk of life finds her affinity some day.

TRUDIE (*not understanding*)
Her infinity?

HOLLIS
Yes, the one man in the world whom she could love—who was born for her—the prince for whom she's been waiting. Take this for minding the bird.

(*He offers her money.*)

TRUDIE (*refusing*)
No, sir. Are you really going to take him from me?

HOLLIS
Yes. Here, this will buy you another.

TRUDIE

I don't want no other, sir. Oh, if you take this little feller from me I'll die, that's all! I'll jes' lay down and die. (*He goes toward the door. She follows and falls down sobbing over the cage.*) Good-bye little feller—good-bye, my poor little stolen thing—good-bye.

HOLLIS (*strongly*)

No, he's not stolen! No—Trudie, you're no longer a thief—you've returned the bird. I can do what I please with him.

TRUDIE (*who has been pinning a rag around the cage so he shouldn't catch cold*)

You can do what you please with him? And what—what are you going to do?

HOLLIS

Why, bless your heart, little girl—I'm going to give him back to you.

(*He hands her the cage. She looks up at him and he, half in fun and half in earnest, bends down and kisses her upturned face.*)

TRUDIE (*as in a trance*)

Golly! Dis must be infinity.

(*Hollis pulls himself together quickly and with a laugh goes off. When TRUDIE opens her eyes he is gone. The sunbeam enters again and flickers about the room. TRUDIE mechanically takes the cover off the cage and the bird begins to sing.*)

TRUDIE (*after listening to the bird's song*)

No, Dickey, you ain't no prince. My prince has come, but he's gone forever.

(*The sunbeam disappears. In a blank sort of way, TRUDIE stands on a chair and hangs up the cage.*)

CURTAIN



THE GUILE OF ROSINA

By WILLIAM MARCUS MACMAHON

ON an ocher October afternoon she sat at the entrance to a shoemaker's stall in squalid, crowded Mulberry Bend, her slender brown hands interlaced limply. That is a sign of the dreamer—and a man of Latin blood might have looked twice in her demure direction without giving offense. To a casual American sight-seer, the girl's purposely averted profile should have suggested nothing more than a slight, dark-favored and alien Italiennes, not meriting a second glance.

James Vernon Braddon, at twenty-five so spectacular a trader in outside securities that the membership committee of the Stock Exchange hypocritically rejected him, was personally maneuvering his high-powered, imported runabout through the cross-streets from Broad, via Broadway, to the Bowery. The extra seats, as likely to be graced by society demoiselle as soubrette, were vacant. Incidentally, it was not always possible to tell which class claimed the guests, because Jimmy Braddon's feminine friends unanimously inclined toward the bacchante buxom—and the stage does *not* have a monopoly of that type.

Braddon's errand this day was far from frivolous. He had in view the arranging of a special Chinatown dinner for several serious-minded, out-of-town, women relatives, who believed that "Pell" was but the careless misspelling of a sinful thoroughfare's shameless name. Of course it might later be the task of the tactful host, following a bizarre Oriental meal, to dissuade his blue stocking relations from light-heartedly "hitting the pipe"—which is an

exaggerated contingency outside of this story.

Proving that even the most aristocratic car manufactured has its limitations, a rear shoe blew out on Mulberry Bend with a furor to set adjacent Black Handers quaking. The disgusted automobilist, determined neither to single-handedly change tire and tube nor to ride "on the flat" to a garage, but to abandon his disgraced machine forthwith for a reliable taxi, drove alongside the curb. Viciously slamming on the emergency brake, he scowled out ungraciously over a gathering throng of olive-skinned auditors.

Thus, with time and place inopportune and totally unprepared in temper, James Vernon Braddon encountered the direct gaze of Rosina Agostino, who sat before the shoemaker's stall, idly interlocking her small brown hands. Then and there the Italian girl—until that moment wholly nonexistent to him—became a sloe-eyed, red-lipped, oval-faced temptation of temptations for Jimmy Braddon's waking and dreaming hours. Aye, this slender, round-breasted outlander could have, by a simple raising of her straight, black brows, inspired that ultra-modern American man to any mad escapade of the Middle Ages—midnight meetings in disguise, eternal vows, the love philter and all the fond frenzies of a sincere Romeo. Be sure, if discovered, her people would have serenely used the lethal stiletto. *Si, signor!*

On Rosina's side, when Jimmy's first glance chanced her way and stopped there, startled, she softly touched a caressing hand to a thick sable crown, and with small white teeth nibbled at a

full under lip. And these are tokens of the native coquette, be race or clime as they may—and there comes a masterful lover to demand the mouth and intertwine the hair.

Given those quiet evidences, a "man of the world" should have been emboldened. It is astounding that this one, having long since lost certain vital scruples, felt bashful and abashed in the presence of artless Rosina.

It was the eyes! There lingered unsuspected in Braddon's subconsciousness a latent ideal—a psychic expectancy that the turmoil of manipulating the leading curb market issues could never banish. In truth, after strong liquors, excessive tobacco or much black coffee—tiding over trading vicissitudes or a crisis with the latest heart flame—Jimmy would perversely avoid the robust femininity he so well understood, and give himself in solitude to an ethereal passion of the imagination.

In one of those reactionary hours, he confided to a chum that the ever recurring vision of a never met brunette, slender and petite, was his torment—and that he would travel to the furthestmost end of the world for just one loving glance from her brooding, darkly indeterminate orbs. That was a good symptom, showing at least the mirage of an honest oasis in his uncaring pursuits. His friend had hope of him then.

And now, face to face with the breathing realization of his inner lust, James Vernon Braddon clung to the steering wheel like a drowning man. Every heartbeat increased his thralldom as he thought in turn of distinguished father, proud mother and critical sister—and then of King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid. Ah, here might be a clever stunt! He would pretend to be the chauffeur.

Leaping from the car, Jimmy gave the offending tire a tentative kick and judicially scratched his head—like any professional. Then, deciding to stop the engine during operations, he took his cane from the rear seat and with it began to press the accelerator, so that the cylinders would be properly primed

for the next starting. This was a false move, and—blushing hotly for the first time in many bold moons—Braddon cast aside the stick and bore down on the foot throttle with his bare hand.

Any one of his intimate fellow brokers, club men and first nighters would have given much to look on while Jimmy Braddon perspiringly replaced that tire and tube. Indeed, he did it exceedingly well, lavishing soapstone and knocking for luck on the rim like any Henri, but progress was slow—because of countless unadroit efforts to capture the fugitive gaze of Rosina Agostino.

When his back happened to be turned, her gloomily glorious eyes took him in comprehensively. She told herself that he, so ready to adore openly where the men of her race but ventured to admire clandestinely, probably was a Protestant, a dog and a pig—and worse. Then she noticed, business like, that the heels of the fellow's boots ran up a bit behind, as if he placed his feet sturdily in walking. Howbeit, despite surface indications, this is not a chronicle of the curb broker's firmness of character and integrity.

When Braddon finally drove away it was in a thunderous fashion, slipping the clutch and conceitedly burning enough vapor through the muffler output to have carried the car ninety miles an hour. He slyly looked back from where the Bend opens into the Chinese quarter. It is doubtful if he saw more than a purposely averted profile.

Late that night, having safely conveyed his daredevil Sunday school relatives away from the almond-eyed allurements, he returned alone to park the imported runabout for a full hour alongside the epochal curbstone. The shoemaker's stall was closed and dark. If Rosina saw Jimmy she did not reveal herself.

All the next day James Vernon Braddon at any moment could have conjured adorable Egyptian orbs between the lines of his hieroglyphic trading book or hiding away on the intricate ticker tape. A lover indulging in such easy fancies is prone to color them to

suit the free mood. This one consoled himself before the market's close with a suave reflection.

If the sullen fellow yesterday a-squat within the shoemaker's stall was by freak of fate husband to that temptation of temptations, he did not measure to his destiny—and therefore was unworthy. That eternal problem of the ages, which many call love, others life and a very few the soul, shone in the girl's wonderful eyes. Could a dago shoemaker sense these things?

"And her moist mouth tinted like—like a kiss!" exclaimed Jimmy under his breath, alas! minded neither of life nor yet the soul. He himself wore that tell-tale badge of the crimson lip, which in the sterner sex is an amorous threat compared to the feminine promise.

So Braddon took that roundabout uptown way again and again, increasingly enamoured of the eyes and the mouth and the hair—as her charms were cunningly unfolded. For of what use is the averted pose but to emphasize interest? Uncertain of the foreign girl but not of himself, he made his bearing circumspect, and no longer embarrassed her with open gallantry while driving by. That was the acumen of a flirtatious wisdom dating from his schoolboy years. Rosina rewarded him now and then with the mere hint of a fleeting glance—which is the incarnation of guile.

At length desperate, one afternoon he left the boots with the worn heels, and while the glowering workman ripped at them his customer spoke to the adorable one at the door. It was necessarily a commonplace, guarded greeting, but when the girl agreed musically that the evening "might-a not be rain-e-e," Jimmy Braddon blundered, being on strange ground.

"Who are you?" he demanded bluntly—and met a quick reproach in withheld eyes and silence. She calmly twirled a yellow metal wristlet over her slender brown hand, showing that here was not one of those thick-fisted laboring folk who can be insulted at the patron's pleasure.

Seeing that the sting of "What are

you?" lurked in his query, Jimmy sought to reassure the diffident creature. It was his theory that in love, as in other kinds of war, the masked battery is most deadly. Wherefore, if one would overwhelm femininity, the bold gaze must be cloaked in a gentle deference of speech and manner.

Religiously adhering to his book of blandishments, Braddon squarely faced the fire of those mesmeric orbs and recklessly watched the distracting play of her sensitive lips, but one would better credit the quite unexpected victory to his laugh. It was positively the most engaging Rosina had ever heard, and trained like her own glances—to cajole, to win and to hold.

"The signor is-a so-o-o kind," her warm mouth said at parting, brokenly. "Si, when the wor-rk is-a finish' to-night I shall-a take it where-a you say. *Addio*." The eyes said everything, as was their province—and surely Rosina Agostino could not help but see the man's face flush and then blanch when he beheld opportunity completing the incident which he had not fully intended to bring about.

At nine o'clock, the butler—aggrieved at a caller's ring on a night when everyone in society knew that the elder Braddons and their daughter were at the Opera—eyed the small foreign woman suspiciously. Then, the errand explained, the babe wrapped in her shawl made him more than thoughtful. He should have been loyal enough to Braddon Junior not to believe—this. However, when Rosina passed into the library and the door closed behind her, the butler recalled that lithe and lissome form and smiled sardonically. Verily, Master Jim might have shown better taste in courting un-American beguilement, for instance a Parisienne, who at least would have looked like a "lady"!

"Good-a evening, signor!" she said anxiously to the white-faced patron who had been striding the floor for a seeming age. "I bring-a the shoes on-a time, *si*? Ah, you like-a my *bambino*? I could-a not leave him at home. He is-a so-o small!"

James Vernon Braddon stared fasci-

natedly at the sleeping child as she cuddled it close in the Old World way, high up so that lip may readily touch cheek. Thereupon, whatever his ethics, it suddenly and forcefully bore in on the man's conscience that the eternal problem of the ages *is* the soul. In his mind's eye he saw himself again traversing Mulberry Bend in the imported runabout—and he would publicly bare and bow his head equalwise, as if his own stately sister sat at the entrance to the shoemaker's stall. Then he found his voice and said aloud:

"The most sacred passion on this sinful earth is mother love"; and he repeated it, softly, lingeringly, like a child committing a lesson to memory. Taking the repaired boots, Jimmy placed a banknote in an envelope and pressed it into the small brown hand. Touching her bare palm with unclean money would have seemed to him a sacrilege. In person he went to bow her out the front door—to the total bedevilment of the butler who watched from afar. If the little foreign woman saw that blistering shame had humbled the bold signor she spared him any sign.

All these things and more Jimmy Braddon confessed to his chum that midnight in a favorite café, loosening his tongue with such large libations that the friend decidedly refused to be a party to a proposed speed jaunt up through Westchester County before daybreak. So Braddon went alone to that distressing accident, wherein the ninety-mile runabout wrapped itself at full stride around a telegraph pole, instantly killing the popular young curb broker at the steering wheel. Of course those newly repaired boots were the most reputable of the dead man's footgear—and they were buried on him. All of which might have been prevented if Jimmy Braddon had seen Rosina Agostino's enchanting eyes in the head

of a society demoiselle or even a soubrette. Moreover, those who believe only one side of a story should not read another word of this tale.

"Ah, signora, pray that-a some day I have-a the *bambino* like yours; never so much as-a the whisper from him all-a the evening! *Si*, happy mothaire; and I thank-a you!" The Italian girl was back at the Bend with the slumbering babe, belonging to the sickly Yiddish woman who lived in the grimy court behind the shoemaker's stall.

"Oi, little Wild Rose!" the pleased mother replied, grinning horribly with a catch in her breath as she reached for the child. "Oi! When you are Filippo's *collah** I will wish you *muzeltof*.† Oi, mine is indeed a man child—and to his mother has come the penalty. Woe is me!"

At night, when the stricken woman could not sleep for coughing, the sympathetic shoemaker assisted in carrying her to the house top so that she might be quieted by the purer air. He will not have to lend a hand in that kindly office very much longer.

Buono Gesu, but savings are desperately slow at the Sign of the Boot! Yet the workman within the stall is no longer sullen, counting that gift money a miracle of the Holy Maria. Often he sings at his bench, occasionally blowing a kiss from leather-stained finger tips to the doorway, caring not a wooden peg who sees—Yid or Wop or rubber-necking Americano. Has that blessed banknote not brought nearer by a month the day of days? And the tawny beauty with the gloomily glorious eyes smiles back brazenly as he ekes out their marriage portion. What a disregard of the proprieties there is in crowded, squalid Mulberry Bend!

* Collah—bride.

† Muzeltof—good luck.



TANNHÄUSER—TWENTIETH CENTURY

By AMELIA JOSEPHINE BURR

THIS is one of the old, old tales that are constantly retold before our eyes; the plot is the same as it was in the days of falchion and tapestry—it is only the catastrophe that has changed.

We have all sighed over the sorrows of Tannhäuser of the Wartburg, that child of impulse; this is a story of a Tannhäuser of today, also a child of the impulse common to all time, but born withal of the conventions of his own. He had the artistic temperament plus, without any suitable musical, literary or pictorial bent to serve at once as safety valve and excuse; that fact being given, trouble may be foreseen, especially as Elisabeth regarded the very word "temperament" with suspicion. She was never pained by hearing it applied to her betrothed, as the world was wont to recognize only the conventional side of his mental parentage. He seemed to the unprejudiced eye—an organ possessed neither by Elisabeth nor by himself—the quintessence of commonplaceness, from his clothes and complexion to his theory of life. He had proposed to Elisabeth in an impulsive moonlit moment at the very outset of his business career; his success having been as inconspicuous as his general appearance, the engagement had lasted quietly for three years, with less than the normal number of quarrels, jealousies and other interludes. Indeed, there were times when Tannhäuser found this tranquil bliss a trifle monotonous. If it ever seemed so to Elisabeth, nobody heard of it.

At last the time came when Elisabeth

began to hem towels publicly, with stress on the left hand, and Tannhäuser to study architects' pamphlets on the way downtown as a suitable and dignified preliminary to renting a flat. They were a trifle disappointed that people showed so little surprise at their announcement, but on the whole they were well content with all the world, especially with themselves, as they felt the calm tide of comfortable joy deepening around them. So calm and deep it was, that when Fate dropped in Lady Venus, they hardly felt the ripple.

But wherever Lady Venus went, complications major and minor were sure to ensue. Tannhäuser joined the ranks of the complicated with a speed and candor that amused everybody but himself, Elisabeth and Lady Venus. Lady Venus was not amused because she was honestly ignorant of the situation; she was so in the habit of being a storm center that a thunderbolt was required to impress her perceptions. She liked Tannhäuser and was kind to him—and if by constant practice her demonstration of this virtue had come to verge upon the appearance of something more, who is to blame her? She had never had occasion to see herself except in the eyes of those who loved her—a pleasant mirror, but scarcely trustworthy.

Tannhäuser basked in the inclusive sunshine of her kindness the more happily because Elisabeth had of late seen one or two points about him which, in views of the prospective life partnership, seemed to call for correction. Lady Venus, lacking this incentive, never tried to improve him; she was

harassed by no mental vision of his strewing cigar ash upon the new rug to be spread on the living-room floor by Uncle Henry's liberal hand. He always placed her cushions and footstool with just the right shade of tender personality, and Lady Venus asked, and wished, no more. As for Tannhäuser, his performance of these courteous offices became more and more imbued with the thought of how prettily Lady Venus's neck was set upon her shoulders, and how fit were her foolishly small feet for treading on the hearts of men. At this point of his reflections, the heart in question became painfully concrete and personal. Of course, this was the time when he should have avoided Lady Venus; equally of course, it was the time when he went to the other extreme. Elisabeth was kept very busy at moments, trying not to detest Lady Venus; she even reproached herself for feeling sorry when, on arriving at a houseparty in the mountains, she saw Lady Venus's face smiling under a rosy parasol on the dock where the little lake steamer made its landing. Tannhäuser neither felt sorry nor reproached himself. During the days that followed he made many noble resolves that Elisabeth should be happy, at whatever cost to his own heart. Having thus soothed his conscience, he left her much at leisure to enjoy the timid and unobtrusive attentions of young Wolfram, a fellow guest of estimable traits, whose mentality Tannhäuser esteemed but lightly. If Elisabeth resented his neglect, nobody heard of it.

On the day of Lady Venus's departure, Tannhäuser was fortified by the moral reflections of a sleepless night. As he found himself walking with her along the familiar path to the spring, he told himself that he would be scrupulously loyal—that not even a look should betray his tragic secret. He repeated it desperately when a rustle in the bushes made her soft hand clutch affrightedly at his sleeve—and then, far down the lake, sounded the hoarse

whistle of the little steamer. Lady Venus drew back and turned toward the house. At the motion, Tannhäuser's fine resolutions crisped to ashes in the sudden blazing consciousness that he was losing her; and he caught her in his arms without a thought beyond his momentary and imperative need to tell her that he could not live without her. What he did tell her, he never fully remembered—but he had a very clear recollection of her head on his shoulder and her lips returning his kiss. Then a sudden wrenching away—her eyes wide and dark with shame, distress and a strange new something that made him catch his breath harshly—and she was gone.

As he slowly retraced his steps, his thoughts were tumultuous and unenviable. He was miserably conscious of loving two women at once—and, yet more miserably, of being loved by both. He wondered wretchedly which of the three was the more to be pitied—then he turned a corner of the path and stopped.

"You mustn't," said Elisabeth. "You mustn't—how can I?" Then in a sudden sobbing rush: "Oh, my dear, you could never trust me if I should treat him so!"

Tannhäuser saw her head lay itself on Wolfram's shoulder just as Lady Venus's had rested on his own—nine thousand years ago, it seemed at a moderate estimate. It became instantly clear to him who was most to be pitied. Then they saw him.

He had no course but one; but as he remembered that last look of Lady Venus, he did not exult in his freedom. He felt, on the contrary, the aggrieved bewilderment of a man who is hustled from a comfortable if uneventful hearth to face an electric storm unsheltered. As Elisabeth and Wolfram disappeared along the path to the spring, he heard the little steamer whistle at the dock. Setting his jaw resolutely, he took a step forward, then stopped short.

"It's funny—but damned if I can laugh!" said Tannhäuser.

MY OWN STORY

By ORRICK G. JOHNS

THAT summer of nineteen-eighty promised at the outset to become the greatest failure any mother's son of us had ever experienced. We all agreed that when it was over we would destroy the souvenirs and speak of it no more—if we ever could be persuaded to see each other again. There were four of us, though Lily Curtiss and her husband now and then increased the number to six. They managed to stay happy without violent measures of safety. I have no doubt their presence was all that prevented wholesale suicide and the hurried return of relatives to attend a four-ply funeral. But Lily did some things that summer which completely changed my opinion of her. I am a fairly reasonable man. I got over the first flush of my hatred. However—

We had been brought together by the common bond of lonesomeness. The rightful guardians of our respectful Lares and Penates had sought the Lakes and the seashore. We sought companionship. As I have said, it was a signal failure. I happened to be better fixed in the matter of servants and house and similar necessities for comfort in the summertime, which is not a nice time at all in my climate. Also I was more isolated, and my refrigerator had a sort of a reputation. I say it with a due feeling of guilt. Anyway, we bunked at my house. There we were, Jim Start, Link Maddox, Ed Rainey and myself, weary of life, weary of everything.

Of course, when such a plan as ours is decided upon, the important thing is to make a beginning. We didn't. I always knew it was the reason we

failed. I have no doubt, had we opened the house to a big crowd the first night and carried off a Lucullan dinner with sufficiently hilarious trimmings, the impetus would have kept us going. After the first day together we had an inkling of the trouble. But I kept putting off that very important beginning in the hope that all would go smoothly enough when we got used to it. I found out my mistake.

Imagine this scene, which occurred on the memorable second evening of our well-intentioned little camping party. Link and I were idly knocking the balls around a billiard table, the perspiration rolling off us in a crude petroleum stream. We were getting madder every minute, first at the cues because they stuck to our hands, then at the balls because their steady click was annoying, and at each other because neither of us could gain the least advantage. We had been at it since dinner—about an hour, I should say. Start was on the veranda reading some ponderous Anthology or some such thing—I never knew what it was. He had luggered it over with some others very carefully, and never failed to put it on top of the fireplace for fear the rain would get it, exactly like one of those insane people who haunt dirty bookshops with holes in their trousers and a consumptive umbrella. Start was a nasty little literary hound, anyway, and I hated him for it. But more of that anon.

When we two expert billiardists had reached the utmost point of exasperation, Rainey came into the room with a bottle of beer in one hand and a cigarette in the other. He announced

that he had been running around the block for exercise. Link looked at him wonderingly, then pityingly. Then he said politely:

"That must have been fine. Did you enjoy it?"

"Why, certainly," said Rainey. "What in thunder are you fellows doing?"

"Can't you see?" I ventured. "We're testing aeroplanes in the basement."

Our steady good manners angered Rainey.

"For heaven's sake," he said, "don't be a bunch of soreheads. I've got a suggestion."

I became attentive at once and almost friendly. Rainey might, taking long chances, have an inspiration.

"Say it," said I encouragingly.

"Let's go over to the roof at Manley's."

I thought it wasn't so bad. But I didn't have time to speak. Maddox gave his ball a vicious jab, brought his cue butt down hard on the floor and turned to Rainey.

"My dear Ed," said he pleadingly, "go make that suggestion to Start. He's out on the veranda. And you must not have any more ideas—they're out of place, you know."

"Maddox," replied Rainey, "your temper is not only unbecoming, it is expensive. You have just poked a hole in the cloth." He stalked out to finish his bottle and his cigarette at a distance.

As for myself, I put up my cue and departed to consider the ghastliness of the situation. I think we all had an epidemic of black spots at the back of the brain, as they say in novels. A little afterward we went to bed. The motor might have saved us that evening. But the motor was broken. I might add that it never was fixed.

Before the end of that week I took the burden of care upon my shoulders, said nothing to any of the boys and telephoned Lily Curtiss. She, dear lady, was infinitely *simpatica*, and just a little sarcastic. I told her in

glowing terms of our incarceration and our desperate disgust.

Would they come? Would they come? Indeed they would!

"You poor boys!"

"Four big men unable to amuse themselves!"

"Yes, tomorrow night."

"Yes, for dinner."

Was Jim Start one of us? I named them over.

"Why, you must be in for the finest kind of time!"

"Well, tomorrow night."

"Good-bye."

And she rattled on with a bit of that gaiety I hoped would revive us. The only thing I had misgivings over was the way she jumped at the mention of Jim Start. It simply reminded me that Lily had committed culture. However, it didn't spoil her—and it did spoil Start. But more of that—as I have said before.

We went through the formalities of being bored for another twenty-four hours and then Lily arrived with her spouse. Lily was never a beauty. But she was the most uncommonly attractive girl that ever lived. Several of us had tried to marry her at one time or another in our young lives.

When she appeared fresh as a daisy to do the honors I began to take hope. The reign of morbidity I saw tottering already before the bunches of enthusiasm Lily was going to hand out. But I calculated wrong for once. What she actually did was to hand a deathblow to my admiration for herself and to make dunces of us all. Yet it wasn't her fault. It all happened on account of the unspeakable Jim Start.

I have known Jim for a very long time. He always had it easy. I think he has holdings in at least twenty different "real estate enterprises." One might as well try to count his city lots and "modern apartments" as to number the stars. Now I have always had to make my pocket money; but I do not hold riches against Jim Start. It's simply that he refuses to do anything else except collect an income that angers me with him. I really

would as lief as not have him a bloated bondholder if he "held" the bond himself instead of letting a lawyer do it for him. And after that dinner party of ours I did hold it against him that he should not have spent his millions a thousand miles away instead of bluffing at two hours' honest work a day and the rest of the time going about my house with books under his arm and a fountain pen over his ear.

My aversion to Jimmy dates from the time he got the literary bug. He started out with "high ideals." It is long since any of his friends—except possibly Lily—allowed him to declaim on the "decline of art in American literature," the "cheapness of the current product"—I use his own words—and all such rot as that. Jimmy got to poetry, and consigned all the poets I had ever heard of to the pulpit or to ignominy. In his opinion, if a poem was popular it was no good. Now as for me, I think popularity is the best qualification in the world—because you do not have to read a popular poem—you can praise it, anyway, with perfect safety. Jimmy belonged, or said he did, to the elect. I merely felt sorry for him. If he belonged to the elect, he deserved a better fate. At one time he was a good sort.

So Lily immediately appointed Jim her special pet, and made letters the topic of conversation. She discovered that Jimmy had the idea of writing a play—a *play*—and *in my house!* I have always been complimented on the appointments of my dining room. My cook is excellent. Lily might have treated me better. On the contrary—

"Really," she began, "you people don't recognize genius; I am sure you don't. And I am sure your constant reflections and insinuations against the literary career must be very annoying to Mr. Start. Don't you understand what it means to write a play? Nothing is more glorious! You mold public opinion; you guide the public taste; you create a work of art."

I saw danger ahead and determined to forestall it.

"If that little fo—if we are to be the

cradle of genius," said I, saving myself from an unbrotherly break, "why not go out and get all the summer professors, invite them in with other paraphernalia and call ourselves a Chautauqua?" I looked suppliance at Lily. "I thought you were going to rescue us," I added.

"And so I am; you shall see," said she with spirit. "I am going to do more than that—I am going to improve you."

"Literary?" queried Rainey timidly.

"Literary," replied Lily positively; "and why not literary, please?"

I assumed a masterful manner.

"My dear Lily," said I, "it is not that we love literature less but life more. We will certainly expire, I assure you, if you set this house delving in tomes and composing doggerel."

"Sacrilegious and irreverent man," said she, "I will make you ashamed of yourself—Mr. Start and I will make you all ashamed of yourselves. Must you think of nothing but summer gardens and musical shows and chorus girls for the whole of three months, when you might be cultivating the better part of yourselves?"

"Oh, Lord!" interrupted Maddox. "Rainey has been trying to get us to the vaudeville ever since this unfortunate affair began. As for chorus girls, the motor is broken. And Start won't spend a paltry few thousand on a new one."

"Yes," said I, "we'll do anything useful, anything worthy, if it is only interesting—don't you see the distinction, Lily?—*interesting*."

"Nonsense!" replied she. "Nothing is more interesting than writing, is it, Mr. Start? And writing plays especially."

"I think it is quite useless, Mrs. Curtiss," said Jimmy sympathetically. "You throw pearls before swine." Then he turned upon me. "I accepted your hospitality," said he, "to write a play. I shall return it by giving you a free box at the *première*."

I started to remark that he could take his free box with him to Hades. But Lily interrupted.

"Bravo!" said she. "That is the

right kind of determination." Lily smiled a complacent smile. "Now I have an idea," she continued, "a literary idea." I thought there was plenty of malice in the way Lily emphasized the word "literary."

Maddox groaned a terrible groan.

"It is the latest thing," continued Lily, totally unperturbed. "We will have a short story contest. That certainly is as worthy as you like. And it's lots of fun in the bargain."

I had only a little fight left in me, but I started to remonstrate.

"Not a word, mine host," said Lily with finality. "We will have no more opposition. Each of you shall write a short story, just like Poe's or O. Henry's. You shall have them all done in a week. I shall be the judge of the best story, and the winner shall be crowned with the laurel wreath—if we can get any—and be consecrated to devote himself henceforth to the Muse."

Now, personally, I had come to the point where it made little difference what happened. Not so Maddox, not so Rainey. To them the thing was preposterous, absurd, insane, all these. I knew, of course, that Lily only did it to spread the ointment of triumph all over Jimmy Start. She was certain he would win the contest, because none of us had ever put pen to paper and he had dabbled in every known brand of ink on the market. Jim was sure of the same thing because he stood well with the judge. He prided himself on the position of literary lapdog, no doubt. I could see him already with his laurel wreath, exuding the Standard product like any green grocer. But our objections were absolutely overruled. Lily sealed us into the bargain with the promise that if she didn't get a story apiece by the end of the week she would speak to none of us again.

Arrangements were made. All "efforts" were to be given to her at the companion dinner at the end of the week. She was to take them home, judge them and crown the victor at an especially prepared festivity later

on. I insisted that there should be more judges, and managed to squeeze in Lily's husband, who liked me, and another mutual friend of us all. There wasn't going to be any favoritism, I determined. It was bad enough to have to turn journalist at a fool woman's whim.

For a week we ruined my carpets with ink, and all but shattered my bric-à-brac with horrible oaths. I pass it over modestly. I had recently decided to break the cigarette habit. It took a fresh hold on me during that time of trial. Then Lily came, gathered in her spoils and departed. We awaited the *dénouement*.

By nature I am not proud. And if I possessed half of the vanity of that little wretch Start, I should long ago have flung myself from the stone rampart of Kerry Bridge, content only if I managed to clear the network of wires just below and in that manner make a certain exit. No, I speak with all due modesty.

In fact, to me the thing in itself held a terrible chagrin. It was not at all necessary, in the first place, that Lily should have made an ass of me before such a crowd. How she got them together I am unable to say, in that period of Ugandan torridity. I felt certain that with all the friends who were present I had irretrievably lost caste. Doubtless, they would continue to be polite. But I knew I should discover in the manner of each of them at our next chance encounter that suggestion of suspicion I myself have been unable to conceal toward acquaintances convicted of genius.

But when I met Jimmy in Lily's conservatory I solemnly swore to have revenge. And my chosen mode of revenge was to carry the thing through to its finish. I would out-Jimmy Jimmy.

I might explain that I had gone among those people for two hours, ejaculating pet epithets upon my own appearance, and looking about as contented as a Hottentot chieftain courting an Esquimo sweetheart. In an

atmosphere of ceremony and vaudeville, the dainty hands of Lily had crowned me with a laurel wreath. If I ever buy a hat as unbecoming as that wreath, it will be in my dotage, when I am far beyond the need or possibility of decent adornment. Since that time I have wondered how a middle-aged man of Julius Cæsar's apparent good sense could have stood for the laurel wreath.

Three times I tried to remove it stealthily, clandestinely, and as promptly was its absence noted by one or another prying individual, who thereupon unearthed it from its hiding place and restored it to my ignoble brow. As the winner of the Curtiss short-story contest I was certainly a failure—until I met Jimmy in the conservatory.

He walked up to me in an obvious pose; in one hand was a manuscript, which I recognized as my own contribution to the event.

"Ah!" said I. "Are you contemplating murder, or have you concluded to quit literature for the stage?" His manner was decidedly that of a tragedian of the old school.

"Charlatan!" he hissed.

"Do you know," I said, "I have always wondered why we wear these hideous modern hats. Now, how much more becoming this natural creation of mine! Sort of Greek simplicity, you know. I feel as light-headed as Bacchus, as free as a satyr, as handsome as a god—all because I have plucked my headgear from the lap of Nature."

Jimmy ignored my pleasantry.

"I have read this tommyrot," said he, tapping the paper with his forefinger. I looked among the palms for a prompter, lighted a cigarette to appear serene and fawned on him like a waiter.

"Indeed!" said I. "Really, my dear fellow, you must let me have yours. I should enjoy looking it over."

"I did not say I enjoyed reading it," replied Jimmy. "However, it only goes to show that ignorant critics are liable to be taken in by practical jokes. Of course," he continued, "this," indicating the manuscript, "is the merest charlatany."

Now if I had not been anxious to teach Jimmy a lesson I should have admitted that all this bayleaf glory was wholly distasteful to me, and that I should far rather have seen him the victim of it than myself. But I refrained for the sake of private intentions. Besides, he was denouncing the judges, and I wanted to find out how much of the outcome had been due to Lily's sense of humor.

"Oh, of course," I said, "it is customary for the losing parties in a contest to put the blame on the judges. But, my dear fellow, I had not expected you to do anything so inartistic. And moreover, you are only carrying out the prophetic part of my story."

"Cut it out," said Jimmy. "I will go further if you dare. I'll bet you fifty that I can sell my story first."

It was almost a deathblow, but I managed not to look staggered. It isn't often I see fifty dollars all in one bunch. And how did I know how many friendly editors he might have had up his sleeve? It was a mean advantage, but I couldn't back down.

"Done," said I, as blithely as a schoolboy to a proposition to go swimming; "but I suggest an improvement. If you sell yours first, I double the cheque. Of course," I added, "the same applies in—the other event."

"Agreed," said Jimmy.

"My manuscript, please," said I. "By the way," I added as he started off, "what is the title of your story?"

I think Jimmy was real, downright mad. But he controlled his feelings admirably.

"The title?" said he carelessly. "Oh, the title! It is, 'The Man That Didn't.'"

I have looked in vain for "The Man That Didn't" in cold print. Lily, for whom I entertain once more nothing but affection, tells me that he has already spent the annual rentals of two apartment houses on postage. As for her, I have sworn she shall have a big six-cylinder on her birthday.

The title of my own story is—well, it's neither here nor there. It ended some time back; but never mind that.

THE VANITY OF LOVE

By W. B. KERR

MAN, fond of woman,
Is of feverish days
And full of trouble.
He cometh forth dressed as a flower and is cut dead;
He loveth a damsel for her hair,
And lo, it is false!
He admireth a maiden's complexion—
But how cometh the powder on his coat?
A flirt fooleth him
And a coquette taketh him in—
For who can read the heart of woman?
He fleeth from an old maid, and is captured by a widow—
For who can escape her wiles?
The tree hath hope—if it be cut down,
It becometh green again;
But man when he getteth “stung”
Is a cynic forevermore.



BROWN—Did you find Bixby's new book deep?
GREEN—No. Just shallow enough to wade through.



BESSIE—Does he stand on ceremony?
JESSIE—No, indeed. He jumps right over it.



WE are all cast in the same mold. Some of us, though, are moldier than others.

THE LADY WITH THE VIOLETS

By EMMA PLAYTER SEABURY

WANTED: A young lady to correspond with me, the object being matrimony. She must be young, good-looking, and have some money in her own right. Address John, care of the *Tribune*.

The clerk turned to the reporter as the young man, having paid for the advertisement, walked out, and said: "Read this. Did you see that fellow? Not half a bad-looking chap, either; did not look at all green. Out of money, I suppose, and wants to marry and get a start in the world from some new woman."

The reporter laughed audibly when he had read the slip, chuckled to himself, and mentally resolved to have some fun.

The next day John received a letter which read:

I have all the requirements you demand. I inclose photograph to assure you that I am not deceiving you as to looks. With regard to my income, I will refer you to my lawyers before I marry you, and satisfy you on that score. In return, I require a man of unexceptional habits and irreproachable character. He must be in a position to make a living for himself. Though I have sufficient for my own support, I shall not support my husband. I want the protection of a husband, the dignity of the title. I am a bachelor maid, but I am well aware of the prejudice existing against old maids, despite all that may be said to the contrary; it is always an advantage socially to be a married woman. There can be no sentiment in this, because we are unacquainted with each other's personality; it is purely business with both of us. A meeting will be postponed till all preliminary arrangements are made. Address Jane, *Tribune* Office.

The next day John wrote:

Your unsentimentality suits me exactly. I abhor a sentimental marriage. I have long felt that if some wise individual could arrange marriages, in which rhapsodists talk of soul affinities and magnetic attractions, there would be less divorces and more happiness, for they

would be made on a common-sense basis, and never without means, nor with any differences in social grade. I must demand one thing of you, the status of your family. I belong to a family that did not have to buy its family crest, and I want the assurance that there will be no plebeianism in my wife. I could not endure the least trace of coarseness transmitted by a butcher or baker ancestor. A large foot or slang is intolerable to me. My wife must be petite and well read in current literature, and she must understand the superintendence of housekeeping. All labor will be unnecessary. I could not endure a woman who cooked her own dinner and came in from the kitchen to dine with me. I should feel as if I were dining with Bridget. Are all these qualifications met by yourself?

JOHN.

Jane responded promptly:

I have no desire to cook my own dinner, nor that of any man. I have never been obliged to do manual labor, and unless I could better my condition, I should be a fool to marry, since I am independent.

My ancestors were Englishmen, who avoided associating with George Washington after the Declaration of Independence, and were Loyalists. They were so well paid for this act of self-denial that they bore the deprivation with uniform cheerfulness. They were remarkable for dancing the minuet with No. 2 shoes.

I never used slang in my life until Chimmie Fadden and George Ade vitiated the taste of the long-suffering public that had so much to bear. I can oversee housekeeping, and you need have no fears of my soiling my hands over a cooking stove. I read all the magazines that are worth reading, and avoid those which cultivate fads. I read the new books after the critics have condemned them, and I am not always complimentary to the author or the critic. I am governed by the opinion of no one, and I do not expect to be governed by my husband.

JANE.

John wrote immediately:

I am afraid you are a woman with fads and foibles. I hate "new women," and club women, and women with ideas. I battle all day with the disagreeable world, and I want

THE LADY WITH THE VIOLETS

at night rest, repose and recreation in my family. I do not care to discuss scientific treatises or worry over encyclopedias at home. I want a dainty, fluffy creature in a ravishing tea gown to await my arrival at home, and not one worried with reforms in church, state or politics. In fact, there are so many things I cannot endure in a wife that I have adopted this method to obtain one, hoping to unearth some shy violet who may be hidden under the follies and rubbish of present society. Your picture is charming. I begin to want to see you.

JOHN.

Jane said:

Thank you, John, but I have no desire to meet you; I am full of fads and foibles and settlement work. Moreover, I believe in the aggressive "new woman." I fear you have made a mistake, and we had better discontinue our correspondence. You want divinity itself. I am no Aphrodite, but a modern, everyday woman, and if I do not find a husband to suit me I shall not marry at all. I shall have a good time for several years yet, then devote myself to charities and fill my life brimful of something better. I do not enjoy discipline, and that is about all the difference there is between a single woman and a married one. It is easier to manage a whole menagerie of animals in a circus than have an individual one roaring around over the loss of a collar button or a badly cooked steak, and have no keeper to thrash and lock him up. I go through life snapping my fingers at your conceited sex and the women who are slaves to your whims. I can live very well without you.

JANE.

John replied:

No, Jane, I am not so sure I can live without you. You are not at all what I started out to win, but I should like to see you. You have some snap, anyway, which is more than can be said of all our grandmothers; and you are not sentimental. Please appoint a meeting very soon and oblige

JOHN.

The next day the young man, John, leaned over the counter at the *Tribune* office, tore a letter open impatiently and read:

I shall be at the park tonight at eight, while the band is playing, near the central pavilion. I shall be dressed in black, and wear violets.

JANE.

A curious smile curled the lip of the young man. A curious smile curled the lip of the reporter who was watching him. The crowd came and went unnoticed.

The evening was perfect; the moon shone over the water, where boats were

gliding, and from which songs and merry laughter floated to the shore. Stately palms and pepper trees cast their shadows over flower-wreathed margins. The band played a witching waltz as group after group passed. Near the central pavilion, around which the crowd promenaded near the music or loitered in the shadow, two men lingered. They passed and repassed each other. One was the young man, John; the other was the reporter. The face of the one had a look of expectancy; the other's wore a contemptuous smile. Just then John gave a start, and the reporter, turning, saw a lady wearing a profusion of violets coming down the central steps of the pavilion with an elderly gentleman. John stepped forward, bowed, smiled and the three walked away together. The reporter looked on in amazement, and sat down on the nearest seat in the shadow to think. Was the victimizer being victimized?

The three passed him several times, evidently oblivious to all but themselves. The man looked like a foreigner, and was distinguished in appearance. The woman was young, vivacious and very beautiful. Had John made several appointments? This was becoming interesting.

Next day Jane heard nothing, likewise the next; and a week passed. Then a letter came.

DEAR JANE:

I begin to feel that I may have been made the victim of a conspiracy. Meet me tonight at eight at the pavilion without fail. Wear violets as before.

JOHN.

Promptly the reporter was at the pavilion. John was already there, and the lady with the violets was also there with the elderly escort. The reporter was disgusted. He got into a boat and pushed out into the lake when he saw the others do so, and he was so intent on his own thoughts, on the curious proceedings of this mysterious three, that he ran into them and nearly upset them. The lady, losing her presence of mind, leaned over to steady the boat, and upset it. In an instant there was a panic among the other boats around

them, and in the network of skiffs it was with some difficulty that they were all rescued. The reporter rescued the lady and hailed a carriage. "What address shall I give the driver?" he asked eagerly.

"Tell him to stop at the Hotel Arlington, and I will give him his orders there. Thank you very much. Good night," and the carriage drove away. "More and more mystifying!" said the astonished reporter.

The next day a letter came from John.

I hope you were not at all inconvenienced by the fright and immersion last night. May I beg your address and the privilege of calling on you tonight?

JOHN.

"I will unravel this mystery," thought the reporter. He wrote:

A parlor in the Hotel Arlington at nine P.M. My escort will be a lady in gray. Ask for Parlor F.

JANE.

Long and late Jane waited, but John did not put in an appearance at all. Next day a letter from John apologized for his absence, illness having been the cause. He ended the letter by thanking Jane for a bunch of flowers left at the *Tribune* office for him. Jane had left no flowers for him. The reporter whistled and went about his work reflectively.

Finally, one day when John tore open one of his letters and read it in the *Tribune* office, the reporter stepped forward, and requested an interview. They went into his private office, and facing about, he exclaimed: "What the dickens do you mean, anyway? I shall not permit my sister to be fooled any longer in this way. I demand satisfaction and explanation. You are either an insane fool or are trying to make one."

Without paying any heed to his invectives, John asked eagerly: "You know the lady, then?"

"Yes, I know her with a vengeance!" growled the reporter.

"Well, where is she? I cannot find her; she has left the city, for all I know," growled John.

Explanations followed, and letters

were produced. In some mysterious way the letters had been mingled with extra ones from another Jane. The meetings had been with the lady with the violets. The reporter confessed the truth, and with heightened interest both men vowed to unravel the mystery. John explained he had been an exile there for his health and bored to death with nothing to do and knowing no one. Someone of his correspondents had said, "Advertise for a wife"; and he had done it on the spur of the moment. He was a gentleman by birth and breeding, and the reporter and he spent many pleasant evenings together, in which they talked much of the lady with the violets.

Singularly enough, he had never mentioned his adventure to anyone. The conflict in the letters had made him suspicious.

"I should say she was an adventuress," said the reporter, "if I had not seen her patrician face; but that is impossible!"

"Impossible," said John Meredith. "Her voice, her manner, her bearing are unmistakably those of a lady."

"But," said the reporter, "what did she talk about? How could you approach her? What did she say?"

"She met me as if we were old friends. She talked principally with her eyes; the presence of the gentleman was forbidding and disapproving, and barred any reference to our correspondence. She called me by my name, and introduced him as her father. I had no chance to ask any questions."

One day, in coming out of the Post Office, Meredith almost ran against her. He lifted his hat to apologize, but she swept haughtily past without noticing him. "The dickens!" he exclaimed.

In an hour he had a letter. It read:

Meet me tonight at the pavilion promptly at eight. I shall be dressed as usual. I have something of importance to communicate. An effort is being made to induce me to go away. I am ensnared by intrigue, and I am very unhappy. I depend on you to rescue me.

JANE.

"By Jove, this is getting interesting!" said Meredith.

The two men were early at the pavilion, half an hour before the time. Just as they sauntered leisurely up the walk, a carriage swept around the corner. Down the steps came the gentleman and the lady with the violets. Meredith stepped out in the full blaze of the electric light. Her dress brushed past him; he essayed to speak, but she held up a warning finger. The carriage door opened; they got in and were whirled away.

"What driveling idiots we are!" said the reporter. "The old codger is trying to kidnap her. He may not be her father at all. We should have rescued her; she will despise us."

Meredith looked up quickly. "You mean she will despise *me!*" he said, with an unpleasant emphasis. "You are not in this part of the game, as I understand it!"

The reporter glowered at him a moment, then laughed and excused himself. He had an engagement at nine.

Next morning Meredith apologized for his rudeness. "I had to wreak vengeance on someone," he said.

That night they went to the theater. In the middle of the first act the rustle of a dress and the subtle perfume of violets passed them. It was the lady and the gentleman. They went into a box and seemed absorbed during the play.

"She is pale and wretched," said Meredith. "I shall follow her tonight."

They waited in the door. The crowd surged out. They took a carriage, and so did the two men. "Follow that carriage," was the order to the driver.

The carriage drove a few blocks, and to their amazement it stopped at the Arlington. They went direct to the elevator. It was ascending when the young men reached the spot. The hotel corridors were crowded. They waited a long time, but saw no one. They searched the register; they questioned the clerk, but elicited nothing.

Next day the elderly gentleman, in apparent agitation, came into the *Tribune* office and dashed off an advertisement. Meredith and the reporter

were watching him, and they read the slip at once.

Sudden and strange disappearance. A young and beautiful lady, tall, dressed in black and wearing violets, disappeared from the Arlington last night. Any information will be gratefully received by anxious friends. Address Colonel X, the *Tribune*.

The young men rushed to the Arlington. They questioned the clerk. "Yes, there had been two retired army officers there from India. A lady was with them, but no one had disappeared. The officers had just gone to the steamer."

They hailed a hansom. On the deck, calmly smoking a cigar, they saw the Colonel of their acquaintance.

"Have you found her?" exclaimed Meredith in an excited voice.

"Found whom?" asked the apparently astonished man.

"The lady you are advertising for! You cannot play this game any longer, sir!"

"I think there must be some mistake, gentlemen. I never advertised for any lady. I do not know any lady but my daughter yonder, Colonel Delorme's wife. We will have this explained."

They looked up and saw advancing toward them the lady with the violets, a gentleman and a little girl. The whistle sounded again. The men looked at each other in a dazed sort of way.

"There is a mistake," said Meredith to the old gentleman, who was smiling faintly. "I beg your pardon!"

"Hasten, or you will be left," he said.

They dashed below just as they were drawing in the plank. They involuntarily looked up as the steamer swung around. The lady and the two gentlemen were on deck with the crowd, waving farewells. The arm of the stranger was thrown caressingly around her. She glanced at them, waved a farewell, unfastened the violets and threw them. They fell at Meredith's feet.

The men looked at each other blankly, but neither stooped to pick them up. The steamer was soon enveloped in mist and at last disappeared in the distance.

LE MENDIANT DE SAINT- ÉTIENNE-DU-MONT

Par J. H. ROSNY AINÉ

QUAND j'avais vingt ans, raconta le député Garrèges, je rencontrais souvent, au haut de la montagne Sainte-Geneviève un vieux mendiant qui s'établissait sous le porche de Saint-Étienne les dimanches et jours fériés, et parfois aussi en semaine. C'était un bougre au poil ébène et argent, dont la jambe droite était réduite des deux tiers. Il avait le teint bette-rave, les yeux indigo, le sourire socratique, et recevait les piécettes de cuivre avec la dignité d'un gueux d'Estramadure. Il me coûtait dix à douze sous par mois, et nous échangions de-ci de-là la monnaie de quelque phrase. Je devinais en lui un philosophe cynique, mais il ne me déplaçait point: que peut-on exiger d'un homme qui ne dispose que d'une seule patte de derrière? Quant à lui, il me témoignait de la sympathie, non à cause des piécettes, mais pour la manière.

Sur ces entrefaites, nous eûmes la guerre, puis la Commune. Je fis assez proprement mon devoir, gelant en hiver aux fortifs et dans la banlieue; peut-être même ai-je descendu quelques Prussiens ou quelques Bavarois: je l'ignore, mais mon chassepot a lâché ses cinq ou six cents balles.

Je ne vous apprends rien en vous déclarant que je pris parti pour la Commune. Mais entendons-nous: je ne pris pas positivement parti en tant que révolutionnaire. Comme maints autres, la paix me mettait hors de moi; ensuite, j'avais le Foutriquet en exécration, et, troisièmement, je croyais à la possibilité de je ne sais quel gouvernement plus honnête que celui dont nous disposions.

Après avoir été un trente-sous pendant le siège, je continuai donc à être un trente-sous sous la Commune. J'eus mes désillusions, mais, d'autre part, je ne savais pas au juste ce qui se passait et j'étais convaincu que les Versaillais nous faisaient la guerre des sauvages: Paris vainqueur, l'ordre sortirait du chaos; la France ferait un choix à égale distance d'un Barré et d'un Galliffet.

Les derniers jours surtout, je perdis complètement le sens des choses. On me racontait des horreurs telles—parfois conformes à la réalité—que je ne voyais rien d'autre à faire que de combattre jusqu'à la dernière cartouche. Je me trouvai finalement en fuite, notre barricade prise d'assaut; avec une douzaine de camarades, je filais comme un zèbre dans les petites rues du quartier. En somme, j'étais perdu. Lâches et mouchards foisonnaient. Aucun asile, aucun moyen de me dépouiller de mon uniforme et de décrasser mes pattes. Je courais, comme la bête à l'hallali, avec la certitude de me heurter à quelque peloton de fusilleurs . . . Recru de fatigue, le cerveau bouilli, j'en eus assez. Je m'assis sur le seuil d'une vieille cassine, j'attendis ceux qui devaient me mettre à mort.

Mille rêves grouillaient en moi. Le ciel était jeune et charmant, un fin soleil m'arrivait à travers les toitures, et, tout de même, cela me paraissait bien triste de claquer . . . Cependant, une sonnerie de clairons approchait; des détonations déchiraient l'atmosphère . . . J'étais frit! . . .

Brusquement, la porte s'ouvrit derrière mon dos, une voix rauque bégaia:

— Hé là! Hé là!

Je me retournai . . . Un visage couleur betterave, des yeux indigo, une barbe argent et ébène: c'était mon mendiant de Saint-Étienne-du-Mont.

— Foutre! grommela-t-il.

Il m'enveloppa d'un regard effaré, puis il épia vivement la rue; en une seconde, son vieux visage passa par toutes les nuances de la peur et de l'hésitation. Puis il eut un geste cordial:

— Entrez!

Il m'attirait par le bras et, repoussant la porte, il me dirigea presque brutalement au travers d'un long corridor visqueux, me fit descendre un escalier, me mena dans une grande cave, où il alluma un énorme cierge d'église.

— Vite, ôtez vos frusques, chuchota-t-il, vite, vite! . . .

En un clin d'œil, je fus en chemise.

— Maintenant, enfilez-moi ça! reprit-il en me tendant d'ignobles hardes.

Je ne me le fis pas dire deux fois. Je revêtis un pantalon fait de vingt pièces, un gilet puant, une veste qui avait dû voir toutes les aventures de la mendigoterie, un chapeau qui remontait, je crois bien, au premier Empire, une paire de souliers convertis de moisissure. Pendant ce temps, le vieux était allé jeter mes habits au fond d'un trou qu'il recouvrit de bois et de loques. Enfin, revenant à moi:

— Chance! les nippes vous vont presque! . . . Allons, aux pattes et au blair, maintenant!

Il me tendit une casserole pleine d'eau, m'aida à me laver, puis me "resalit" d'une façon particulière, avec une substance calcaire.

— Ça y est! fit-il. T'es sale, mais pas à la manière d'un insurgé. N'oublie pas que t'es un mendigot. Si y vient des types, tu tendras la main . . .

Un grand coup à la porte de la rue le fit bondir. Le mendiant devint vert d'épouvanter, tout son corps trembla comme une branche dans l'ouragan.

— C'est que je ne suis pas courageux! avoua-t-il avec une grimace hideuse. Tu comprends, un mendigot, ça aime la vie! Ça ne fait rien . . . On se tiendra.

On entendit des pas dans le corridor, puis dans la chambre et les escaliers. A la fin, deux soldats et un caporal paraurent au seuil de la cave. Le vieux avait presque repris son sang-froid, et, du reste de sa peur, il faisait de l'humilité:

— S' que vous en avez pris de ces salauds ed' communards? s'exclama-t-il. Ah! y est temps que ça finisse. Pus de messe, pus de charité, on crevait de faim, nous autres . . . C'est-y que vous n'auriez pas un morceau de quèque chose . . . là! un reste de pain . . . J'suis-t-un pauvre bougre qui peut pas travailler.

Il faisait toute espèce de gestes qui attiraient l'attention des survenants, et puis, il avait trop bien le physique de l'emploi!

— Qu'est-ce que c'est que ce cierge? gronda le caporal.

— C'est un que j'ai sauvé des pattes de ces crapules! pleurnicha le mendiant . . . Quien! de quoi allumer leurs incendies! Hein! toi? fit-il en me tapant sur l'épaule, on leur z-y-a joué quelques bons tours, nous deusses! Alors, m'sieu le caporal, vous n'avez pas un morceau pour nous mett' sous la dent?

Le caporal haussa les épaules et, sans ajouter une parole, disparut avec ses deux hommes. Pendant quelque temps encore, ils fouillèrent la maison: ils n'y trouvèrent d'ailleurs, à part nous deux, que des femmes et des enfants.

— Vous êtes sauvé! dit alors le mendiant. Et ça me fait plaisir, mais, là, vous m'avez fichu une sacrée cochonnerie de frousse . . .

Je le pris dans mes bras et je l'embrassai comme un frère. Il riait maintenant, il avait repris sa bonne tête socratique:

— Les mendians, ça porte bonheur! ricana-t-il. Allez, monsieur, laissez crier les philanthropes. Si vous n'aviez pas quelquefois donné vot' pièce de deux sous au vieux mendiant de Saint-Étienne-du-Mont vous seriez à l'heure qu'il est sur le dos, avec des balles de chassepot dans la caboché!

À beau jeu, beau retour.

H A V O C

By E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

Synopsis of Previous Chapters

Arthur Dorward, a young American journalist in Vienna, secures for his paper a great "beat"—a full account of a private conference between the Emperor and the Czar, and attempts to get out of the country with his papers. On the train with him is David Bellamy, an English diplomatic agent, and several Austrian secret service men. Dorward is attacked by the Austrians, thrown from the train and his papers taken from him. Bellamy then plots to secure the papers and enlists the help of Louise Idiale, a Servian opera singer, who proceeds to encourage the attentions of Von Behrling, in charge of the Austrian party, and induces him to agree to sell the papers to the English government. He turns over to Bellamy a packet, found to contain only blank paper, for which the English have paid twenty thousand pounds, and Bellamy is thereby discredited. Von Behrling is found murdered that same evening. Stephen Laverick, a broker, finds the body and takes with him the wallet found on the dead man. He uses the money to tide over a business crisis, and helps his late partner Arthur Morrison, who seems to be in some trouble, to get out of the country. He receives a visit from a man who inquires for Morrison.

This novel began in the September SMART SET. Back copies of the magazine may be had from any newsdealer or the publishers.

XVII

THE man's eyes gleamed. He was a typical waiter—pasty-faced, unwholesome-looking—but he had small eyes of a greenish cast, and they were expressive.

"I think, sir," he said, "you've some idea yourself, then, that Mr. Morrison has been getting into a bit of trouble."

"We won't discuss that," Laverick answered. "You must either go away—it's past nine o'clock and I haven't had my dinner yet—or you must treat me as you would Mr. Morrison."

The man looked around the room. The door behind had been left ajar. He stepped backward and closed it.

"You'll pardon the liberty, sir," he said, "but this is a serious matter I'm going to speak about. I'll just tell you a little thing and you can form your own conclusions. Last night we was open late at the Black Post. We keep open, sir, as you know, when you gentlemen at the Stock Exchange are busy. About nine o'clock there was a strange cus-

tomer came in. He had two drinks and he sat as though he were waiting. In about arf an hour another gent came in, and they went into a corner together and seemed to be doing some sort of business. Anyways, there was papers passed between them. I was fairly busy about then, as there were one or two more customers in the place, but I noticed these two talking together, and I noticed the dark gentleman leave. The others went out a few minutes afterward, and the gent who had come first was alone in the place. He sat in the corner and he had a pocketbook on the table before him. I had a sort of casual glance at it when I brought him a drink, and it seemed to me that it was full of banknotes. He sat there just like a man extra deep in thought. Just after eleven in came Mr. Morrison. I could see he was rare and put out, for he was white, and shaking all over. 'Give me a drink, Jim,' he said—"a big brandy and soda, big as you make 'em.'"

The man paused for a moment as though to collect himself. Laverick

was suddenly conscious of a strange thrill creeping through his pulses.

"Go on," he said. "That was after he left me. Go on."

"He was quite close to the other gent, Mr. Morrison was," the waiter continued, "but they didn't say nowt to each other. All of a sudden I see Mr. Morrison set down his glass and stare at the other chap as though he'd seen something that had given him a turn. I leaned over the counter and had a look, too. There he sat—this tall, fair chap who had been in the place so long—with his big pocket-book on the table in front of him, and even from where I was I could see that there was a great pile of banknotes sticking out from it. All of a sudden he looks up and sees Mr. Morrison a-watching him and me from behind the counter. Back he whisks the pocket-book into his pocket, calls me for my bill, gives me two mouldy pennies for a tip, buttons up his coat and walks out."

"You know who he was?" Laverick inquired.

Again the waiter paused for a moment before he answered—paused and looked nervously around the room. His voice shook.

"He was the man as was murdered about a hundred yards off the Black Post last night, sir," he said.

"How do you know?" Laverick asked.

"I got an hour off today," the waiter continued, "and went down to the morgue. There was no doubt about it. There he was—same chap, same clothes. I could swear to him anywhere, and I reckon I'll have to at the inquest."

Laverick's cigarette burned away between his fingers. It seemed to him that he was no longer in the room. He was listening to Big Ben striking the hour; he was back again in that tiny little bedroom with its spotless sheets and lace curtains. The man on the bed was looking at him. Laverick remembered the look and shivered.

"What has this to do with Morrison? Come," he declared, "you must not go too far with this thing. I have admitted, to clear the way for anything you have to say, that Mr. Morrison would not care to have his name men-

tioned in connection with this affair. But because he left your bar a few minutes after the murdered man, it is sheer folly to assume that therefore he is necessarily implicated in his death. I cannot conceive anything more unlikely."

The man smiled—a slow, uncomfortable smile which suggested mirth less than anything in the world.

"There are a few other things, sir," he remarked—"one in especial."

"Well?" Laverick inquired. "Let's have it. You had better tell me everything that is in your mind."

"The man was stabbed with a horn-handled knife."

"I remember reading that," Laverick admitted. "Well?"

"The knife was mine," his visitor affirmed, dropping his voice once more to a whisper. "It lay on the edge of the counter, close to where Mr. Morrison was leaning, and as soon as he'd gone I missed it."

Laverick was silent. What was there to be said? "Horn-handled knives," he muttered, "are not uncommon things."

"One doesn't possess a knife for a matter of eight or nine years without being able to swear to it," the other remarked drily. "There doesn't need to be any more evidence than mine to send Mr. Morrison to the gallows."

"We will waive that point," Laverick declared. "The jury sometimes are very hard to convince by circumstantial evidence alone. However, as I have said, let us waive that point. Your position is clear enough. You go to the inquest; you tell all you know; and you get nothing. You are a poor man; you have worked hard all your life. The chance has come in your way to do yourself a little good. Now take my advice. Don't spoil it all by asking for anything ridiculous. It won't do for you to come into a fortune a few days after this affair, especially if it ever comes out that the murdered man was in your place. I am here to act for Mr. Morrison. What is it that you want?"

"You are talking like a gent, sir,"

the man said—"like a sensible gent, too. I'd have to keep it quiet, of course, that I'd come into a bit of money—just at present, at any rate. I could easy find an excuse for changing my job—perhaps get away from London altogether. I've got a few pounds saved and I've always wanted to open a banking account. A gent like you perhaps could put me in the way of doing it."

"How much do you consider would be a satisfactory balance to commence with?" Laverick asked.

"I was thinking of a thousand pounds, sir."

Laverick was thoughtful for a few moments. "By the way, what is your name?" he inquired at last.

"James Shepherd, sir," the man answered, "generally called Jim, sir."

"Well, you see, Shepherd," Laverick continued, "the difficulty is in your case, as in all similar ones, that one never knows where the thing will end. A thousand pounds is a considerable sum, but in four amounts, with three months' interval between them, it could be arranged. This would be better for you, in any case. Two hundred and fifty pounds is not an unheard-of sum for you to have saved or got together. After that your investments would be my lookout, and they would produce, as I have said, another seven hundred and fifty pounds. But what security have I—has Mr. Morrison, let us say—that you will be content with this sum?"

"He hasn't any, sir," the man admitted at once. "He couldn't have any. I'm a modest living man, and I've no desire to go shouting around that I'm independent all of a sudden. That wouldn't do, nohow. A thousand pounds would bring me in near a pound a week if I invested it, or two pounds a week for an annuity, my health being none too good. I've no wife or children, sir. I was thinking of an annuity. With two pounds a week I'd have no cause to trouble anyone again."

Laverick considered. "It shall be done," he said. "Tomorrow I will buy shares for you to the extent of two hundred and fifty pounds. They will be

deposited in a bank. Some day you can look in and see me, and I will take you round there. You are my client who has speculated under my instructions successfully, and you will sign your name and become a customer. After that, you will speculate again. When your thousand pounds has been made, I will show you how to buy an annuity. Keep your mouth shut, and last night will be the luckiest night of your life. Do you drink?"

"A drop or two, sir," the man admitted.

"Do you talk when you're drunk?" Laverick asked.

"Never, sir," the man declared. I've a way of getting a drop too much when I'm by myself. Then I tumbles off to sleep and that's the end of it. I've no fancy for company at such times."

"It's a good thing," Laverick remarked, thrusting his hand into his pocket. "Here's a five-pound note on account. I dare say you can manage to keep sober tonight, at any rate. That's all, isn't it?"

"That's all, sir," the man answered, "unless I might make so bold as to ask whether Mr. Morrison has really hooked it?"

"Mr. Morrison had decided to 'hook it,' as you graphically say, before he came in for that drink to your bar, Shepherd," Laverick affirmed. "Business had been none too good with us, and we had a disagreement."

The man nodded. "I see, sir," he said, taking up his hat. "Good night, sir."

"Good night," Laverick answered. "You can find your way down?"

"Quite well, sir, and thank you," declared Mr. Shepherd, closing the door softly behind him. Laverick sat down in his chair. He had forgotten that he was hungry. He was faced now with a new tragedy.

XVIII

THEY stood together upon the platform watching the receding train. The girl's eyes were filled with tears, but

Laverick was conscious of a sense of immense relief. Morrison had been at the station some time before the train was due to leave, and although a physical wreck, he seemed only too anxious to depart. He had all the appearance of a broken-spirited man. He looked about him on the platform, and even from the carriage, in the furtive way of a criminal expecting apprehension at any moment. The whistle of the train had been a relief as great to him as to Laverick.

"We'll write you to New York, care of Barclay's," Laverick called out. "Good luck, Morrison! Pull yourself together and make a fresh start."

Morrison's only reply was a somewhat feeble nod. Laverick had not attempted to shake hands. He felt himself stirred almost to anger by the perfunctory farewell which was all this man had offered to the girl he had treated so inconsiderately. His thoughts were engrossed upon himself and his own danger. He would not even have kissed her if she had not drawn his face down to hers at the last moment and whispered a reassuring little message. Laverick turned away. For some reason or other he felt himself shuddering. Conversation during those last few moments had been increasingly difficult. The train was off at last, however, and they were alone. They turned silently toward the exit.

"Are you going back home?" Laverick asked.

"Yes," she answered listlessly. "There is nothing else to do."

"Isn't it rather sad for you there by yourself?"

She nodded. "It is the first time," she said. "Another girl and her mother have lived with me always. They started off last week, touring. They are paying a little toward the house or I should have to go into rooms. As it is, I think that it would be more comfortable."

Laverick looked at her wonderingly. "You seem such a child," he said, "to be left all alone in the world like this."

"But I am not a child actually, you see," she answered, with an effort at

lightness. "Somehow, though, I do miss Arthur's going. His father was always very good to me, and made him promise that he would do what he could. I didn't see much of him, but one felt always that there was somebody. It's different now. It makes one feel very lonely."

"I, too," Laverick said, with commendable mendacity, "am rather a lonely person. You must let me see something of you now and then."

She looked up at him quickly. Her gaze was altogether disingenuous, but her eyes—those wonderful eyes—spoke volumes.

"If you really mean it," she said, "I should be so glad."

"Supposing we start today," he suggested, smiling. "We might have dinner together quite early. Then I would take you to the theater and meet you afterward if you liked."

"If I liked!" she whispered. "Oh, how good you are!"

"I am not at all sure about that. Now I'll put you in this taxi and send you home."

She laughed. "You mustn't do anything so extravagant. I can get a bus just outside. I never have taxicabs."

"Just this morning," he insisted; "and I think he won't trouble you for his fare. You must let me, please. Remember that there's a large account open still between your half-brother and me, so you needn't mind these trifles. Till this evening, then. Shall I fetch you or will you come to me?"

"Let me fetch you, if I may," she said. "It isn't nice for you to come down to where I live. It's such a horrid part."

"Just as you like," he answered. "I'd be very glad to fetch you if you prefer it, but it would give me more time if you came. Shall we say seven o'clock? I've written the address down on this card so that you can make no mistake."

The morning papers had nothing new to report concerning the murder in Crooked Friars Alley. Evidently what information the police had obtained they were keeping for the inquest. Laverick, from the moment when he entered the

office, had little or no time to think of the tragedy under whose shadow he had come. The long predicted boom had arrived at last. Without lunch, he and all his clerks worked until after six o'clock. Even then Laverick found it hard to leave. During the day a dozen people or so had been in to ask for Morrison. To all of them he had given the same reply—Morrison had gone abroad on private business for the firm. Very few were deceived by Laverick's dry statement. He was quite aware that he was looked upon either as one of the luckiest men on earth, or as a financier of consummate skill. The failure of Laverick & Morrison had been looked upon as a certainty. How they had tided over that twenty-four hours had been known to no one—to no one but Laverick himself and the manager of his bank.

Just before four o'clock, the telephone rang at his elbow. "Mr. Fenwick, from the bank, sir, is wishing to speak to you for a moment," his head clerk announced.

Laverick took up the telephone. "Yes," he said, "I am Laverick. Good afternoon, Mr. Fenwick. Absolutely impossible to spare any time today. What is it? The account is all right, isn't it?"

"Quite right, Mr. Laverick," was the answer. "At the same time, if you could spare me a moment I should be glad to see you concerning the deposit you made yesterday."

"I will come in tomorrow," Laverick promised. "This afternoon it is quite out of the question. I have a crowd of people waiting to see me, and several important engagements for which I am late already."

The banker seemed scarcely satisfied. "I may rely upon seeing you tomorrow?" he pressed.

"Tomorrow," Laverick repeated, ringing off.

For a time this last message troubled him. As soon as the day's work was over, however, and he stepped into his cab, he dismissed it entirely from his thoughts. It was curious how, notwithstanding this new seriousness which

had come into his life, notwithstanding that sensation of walking all the time on the brink of a precipice, he set his face homeward and looked forward to his evening with a pleasure which he had not felt for many months. The whirl of the day faded easily from his mind. He lived no more in an atmosphere of wild excitement, of changing prices, of feverish anxiety. How empty his life must have unconsciously grown that he could find so much pleasure in being kind to a pretty child! It was hard to think of her otherwise—impossible. A strange heritage, this, to have been left him by such a person as Arthur Morrison. How in the world, he wondered, did he happen to have such a connection?

She was a little shy when she arrived. Laverick had left special orders downstairs, and she was brought up into his sitting room immediately. She was very quietly dressed except for her hat, which was large and wavy. He found it becoming, but he knew enough to understand that her clothes were simple and inexpensive, and he was conscious of being curiously glad of the fact.

"Tell me, how are you feeling now?" he asked her.

"Rather lonely," she admitted, making a pathetic little grimace. "That is to say, I *have been* feeling lonely," she added softly. "I don't now, of course."

"You are a queer little person," he said kindly, as they went down in the lift. "Haven't you any friends?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"What sort of friends could I have?" she asked. "The girls in the chorus with me are very nice, some of them, but they know so many people whom I don't, and they are always out to supper, or something of the sort."

"And you?"

She shook her head. "I went to one supper party with the girl who is near me," she said. "I liked it very much, but they didn't ask me again."

"I wonder why?" he remarked.

"Oh, I don't know," she went on drearily. "You see, I think the men who take out girls who are in the chorus generally expect to be allowed to make

love to them. At any rate, they behaved like that. Such a horrid man tried to say nice things to me and I didn't like it a bit. So they left me alone afterward. The girl I lived with and her mother are quite nice, and they have a few friends we go to see sometimes on Sundays or holidays. It's dull, though, very dull, especially now they're away."

"What on earth made you think of going on the stage at all?" he asked.

"What could one do?" she answered. "My mother's money died with her—she had only an annuity—and my step-father, who had promised to look after me, lost all his money and died quite suddenly. Arthur was in a stock-broker's office and he couldn't save anything. My only friend was my old music master, and he had given up teaching and was director of the orchestra at the Universal. All he could do for me was to get me a place in the chorus. I have been there ever since. They keep on promising me a little part but I never get it. It's always like that in theaters. You have to be a favorite of the manager's or you never get your chance unless you are unusually lucky."

"I don't know much about theaters," he admitted. "I am afraid I am rather a stupid person. When I can get away from work I go into the country and play cricket or golf, or anything that's going. When I am up in town, I am generally content with looking up a few friends, or playing bridge at the club. I never have been a theatergoer."

"I wonder," she asked, as they seated themselves at a small round table in the restaurant which he had chosen, "I wonder why every now and then you look so serious?"

"I didn't know that I did," he answered. "We've had hard times lately in business, though. I suppose that makes a man look thoughtful."

"Poor Mr. Laverick!" she murmured softly. "Are things any better now?"

"Much better."

"Then you have nothing really to bother you?" she persisted.

"I suppose we all have something,"

he replied, suddenly grave. "Why do you ask that?"

She leaned across the table. In the shaded light, her oval face with its little halo of deep brown hair seemed to him as though it might have belonged to some old miniature. She was delightful, like Watteau work upon a piece of priceless porcelain—delightful when the lights played in her eyes and the smile quivered at the corner of her lips. Just now, however, she became very much in earnest.

"I will tell you why I ask that question," she said. "I cannot help worrying still about Arthur. You know you admitted last night that he had done something. You saw how terribly frightened he was this morning, and how he kept on looking around as though he were afraid that he would see somebody whom he wished to avoid. Oh, I don't want to worry you," she went on, "but I feel so terrified sometimes. I feel that he must have done something—bad. It was not an ordinary business trouble which took the life out of him so completely."

"It was not," Laverick admitted at once. "He has done something, I believe, quite foolish; but the matter is in my hands to arrange, and I think you can assure yourself that nothing will come of it."

"Did you tell him so this morning?" she asked eagerly.

"I did not," he answered. "I told him nothing. For many reasons it was better to keep him ignorant. He and I might not have seen things the same way, and I am sure that what I am doing is for the best. If I were you, little Miss Zoe, I think I wouldn't worry any more. Soon you will hear from your brother that he is safe in New York, and I think I can promise you that the trouble will never come to anything serious."

"Why have you been so kind to him?" she asked timidly. "From what he said, I do not think that he was very useful to you, and, indeed, you and he are so different."

Laverick was silent for a moment. "To be honest," he said, "I think that I should not have taken so much trouble

for his sake alone. You see," he continued, smiling, "you are rather a delightful young person, and you were very anxious, weren't you?"

Her hand came across the table—an impulsive little gesture, which he nevertheless found perfectly natural and delightful. He took it in his, and would have raised the fingers to his lips but for the waiters who were hovering around.

"You are so kind," she said, "and I am so fortunate. I think that I wanted a friend."

"You poor child," he answered, "I should think you did. You are not drinking your wine."

She shook her head. "Do you mind?" she asked. "A very little gets into my head because I take it so seldom, and the manager is cross if one makes the least bit of a mistake. Besides, I do not think that I like to drink wine. If one does not take it at all, there is an excuse for never having anything when the girls ask you."

He nodded sympathetically.

"I believe you are quite right," he said—"in a general way, at any rate. Well, I will drink by myself to your brother's safe arrival in New York. Are you ready?"

She glanced at the clock. "I must be there in a quarter of an hour," she told him.

"I will drive you to the theater," he said, "and then go round and fetch my ticket."

As he waited for her in the reception hall of the restaurant, he took an evening paper from the stall. A brief paragraph at once attracted his attention.

MURDER IN THE CITY

We understand that very important information has come into the hands of the police. An arrest is expected tonight or tomorrow at the latest.

He crushed the paper in his hand and threw it to one side. It was the usual sort of thing. There was nothing they could have found out—nothing, he told himself.

XIX

As soon as he had gone through his letters on the following morning, Laverick, in response to a second and more

urgent message, went round to his bank. Mr. Fenwick greeted him gravely. He was feeling keenly the responsibilities of his position. Just how much to say and how much to leave unsaid was a question which called for a full measure of diplomacy.

"You understand, Mr. Laverick," he began, "that I wished to see you with regard to the arrangement we came to the day before yesterday."

Laverick nodded. It suited him to remain monosyllabic. "Well?" he asked.

"The arrangement, of course, was most unusual," the manager continued. "I agreed to it as you were an old customer and the matter was an urgent one."

"I do not quite follow you," Laverick remarked, frowning. "What is it you wish me to do—withdraw my deposit?"

"Not in the least," the manager answered hastily.

"You know the position of our market, of course," Laverick went on. "Three days ago I was in a situation which might have been called desperate. I could quite understand that you needed security to go on making the necessary payments on my behalf. Today things are entirely different. I am twenty thousand pounds better off, and if necessary I could realize sufficient to pay off the whole of my overdraft within half an hour. That I do not do so is simply a matter of policy and prices."

"I quite understand that, my dear Mr. Laverick," the bank manager declared. "The position is simply this: We have had a most unusual and a strictly private inquiry, of a nature which I cannot divulge to you, asking whether any large sum in five-hundred-pound banknotes has been passed through our account during the last few days."

"You have actually had this inquiry?" Laverick asked calmly.

"We have. I can tell you no more. The source of the inquiry was, in a sense, amazing."

"May I ask what your reply was?"

"My reply was," Mr. Fenwick said

slowly, "that no such notes had passed through our account. We asked them, however, without giving any reasons, to repeat their question in a few days' time. Our reply was perfectly truthful. Owing to your peculiar stipulations, we are simply holding a certain packet for you in our security chamber. We know it to contain banknotes, and there is very little doubt that it contains the notes which have been the subject of this inquiry. I want to ask you, Mr. Laverick, to be so good as to open that packet, let me credit the notes to your account in the usual way, and leave me free to reply as I ought to have done in the first instance to this inquiry."

"The course which you suggest," replied the other, "is one which I absolutely decline to take. It is not for me to tell you the nature of the relations which should exist between a banker and his client. All that I can say is that those notes are deposited with you and must remain on deposit, and that the transaction is one which must be treated entirely as a confidential one. If you decline to do this, I must remove my account, in which case I shall of course take the packet away with me. To be plain with you, Mr. Fenwick," he wound up, "I do not intend to make use of those notes; I never intended to do so. I simply deposited them as security until the turn in price of Unions came."

"It is a very nice point, Mr. Laverick," the bank manager remarked. "I should consider that you had already made use of them."

"Everyone to his own conscience," Laverick answered calmly.

"You place me in a very embarrassing position, Mr. Laverick."

"I cannot admit that at all," Laverick replied. "There is only one inquiry which you could have had which could justify you in insisting upon what you have suggested. It emanated, I presume, from Scotland Yard?"

"If it had," Mr. Fenwick answered, "no considerations of etiquette would have intervened at all. I should have felt it my duty to have revealed at once the fact of your deposit. At the same time, the inquiry comes from an even

more important source, a source which cannot be ignored."

Laverick thought for a moment. "After all, the matter is a very simple one," he declared. "By four o'clock this afternoon my account shall be within its limits. You will then automatically restore to me the packet which you hold on my behalf, and the possession of which seems to embarrass you."

"If you do not mind," the banker answered, "I should be glad if you would take it with you. It means, I think, a matter of six or seven thousand pounds added to your overdraft, but as a temporary thing we will pass that."

"As you will," Laverick assented carelessly. "The charge of those documents is a trust with me as well as with yourself. I have no doubt that I can arrange for their being held in a secure place elsewhere."

The usual formalities were gone through, and Laverick left the bank with the brown leather pocketbook in his breast coat pocket. Arrived at his office, he locked it up at once in his private safe and proceeded with the usual business of the day. Even with an added staff of clerks, the office was almost in an uproar. Laverick threw himself into the struggle with a whole-hearted desire to escape from these unpleasant memories. He succeeded perfectly. It was two hours before he was able to sit down even for a moment. His head clerk, almost as exhausted, followed him into his room.

"I forgot to tell you, sir," he announced, "that there's a man outside—Mr. Shepherd is his name, I believe. He said he had a small investment to make which you promised to look after personally. He would insist on seeing you—said he was a waiter at a restaurant which you visited sometimes."

"That's all right," Laverick declared. "You can show him in. We'll probably give him American rails."

"Can't we attend to it in the office for you, sir?" the clerk asked. "I suppose it's only a matter of a few hundreds."

"Less than that, probably, but I

promised the fellow I'd look after it myself. Send him in, Scropes."

There was a brief delay and then Mr. Shepherd was announced. Laverick, who was sitting with his coat off, smoking a well earned cigarette, looked up and nodded to his visitor as the door closed.

"Sorry to keep you waiting," he remarked. "We're having a bit of a rush."

The man laid down his hat and came up to Laverick's side. "I guess that, sir," he said, "from the number of people we've had in the Black Post today, and the way they've all been shouting and talking. They don't seem to eat much these days, but there's some of them can shift the drink."

"I've got some sound stocks looked up for you," Laverick remarked, "two hundred and fifty pounds' worth. If you'll just approve that list as a matter of form," he added, pushing a piece of paper across, "you can come in tomorrow and have the certificates. I shall tell them to debit the purchase money to my private account, so that if anyone asks you anything, you can say that you paid me for them."

"I'm sure I'm much obliged, sir," the man said. "To tell you the truth," he went on, "I've had a bit of a scare today."

Laverick looked up quickly. "What do you mean?" he demanded.

"May I sit down, sir? I'm a bit worn out. I've been on the go since half past ten."

Laverick nodded and pointed to a chair. Shepherd brought it up to the side of the table and leaned forward.

"There's been two men in today," he said, "asking questions. They wanted to know how many customers I had there on Monday night, and could I describe them—was there anyone I recognized—and so on."

"What did you say?"

"I declared I couldn't remember anyone. To the best of my recollection, I told them, there was no one served at all after ten o'clock. I wouldn't say for certain—it looked as though I might have had a reason."

"And were they satisfied?"

"I don't think they were," Shepherd admitted. "Not altogether, that is to say."

"Did they mention any names?" asked Laverick—"Morrison's, for instance? Did they want to know whether he was a regular customer?"

"They didn't mention no names at all, sir," the man answered, "but they did begin to ask questions about my regular clients. Fortunate like, the place was so crowded that I had every excuse for not paying any too much attention to them. It was all I could do to keep on getting orders attended to."

"What sort of men were they?" Laverick asked. "Do you think that they came from the police?"

"I shouldn't have said so," Shepherd replied, "but one can't tell, and these gentlemen from Scotland Yard do make themselves up so sometimes on purpose to deceive. I should have said that these two were foreigners, the same kidney as the poor chap as was murdered. I heard a word or two pass, and I sort of gathered that they'd a shrewd idea as to that meeting in the Black Post between the man who was murdered and the little dark fellow."

Laverick nodded. "Jim Shepherd," he declared, "you appear to me to be a very sagacious person."

"I'm sure I'm much obliged, sir; I can tell you, though," he added, "I don't half like these chaps coming round making inquiries. My nerves ain't quite what they were, and it gives me the jumps."

Laverick was thoughtful for a few moments. "After all, there was no one else in the bar that night," he remarked, "no one who could contradict you?"

"Not a soul," Jim Shepherd agreed.

"Then don't you bother," Laverick continued. "You've been wise. You haven't given yourself away altogether. You've simply said that you don't recollect anyone coming in. Why should you recollect? At the end of a day's work you are not likely to notice every stray customer. Stick to it, and, if you take my advice, don't go throwing any

money about, and don't give your notice in for another week or so. Pave the way for it a bit. Ask the governor for a raise—say you're not making a living out of it."

"I'm on," Jim Shepherd remarked, nodding his head. "I'm on to it, sir. I don't want to get into no trouble, I'm sure."

"You can't," Laverick answered drily, "unless you chuck yourself in. You're not obliged to remember anything. No one can ever prove that you remembered anything. Keep your eyes open, and let me hear if these fellows turn up again."

"I'm pretty certain they will, sir," the man declared. "They sat about waiting for me to be disengaged, but when my time off came, I hopped out the back way. They'll be there again tonight, sure enough."

Laverick nodded. "Well, you must let me know," he said, "what happens."

Jim Shepherd leaned across the corner of the table and dropped his voice.

"It's an awful thing to think of, sir," he whispered, blinking rapidly. "I wouldn't be that young Mr. Morrison for all that great pocketful of notes. But my, there was a sight of money there, sir! He'll be a rich man for all his days if nothing comes out."

"We won't talk any more about it," Laverick insisted. "It isn't a pleasant thing to think about or talk about. We won't know anything, Shepherd; we shall be better off."

The man took his departure and the whirl of business recommenced. Laverick turned his back upon the city only a few minutes before eight, and tired out, he dined at a restaurant on his way home. When at last he reached his sitting room he threw himself on the sofa and lit a cigar. Once more the evening papers had no particular news. This time, however, one of them had a leading article upon the English police system. The fact that an undetected murder should take place in a wealthy neighborhood, away from the slums, a murder which must have been premedi-

tated, was in itself alarming. Until the inquest had been held, it was better to make little comment upon the facts of the case so far as they were known. At the same time, the circumstance could not fail to excite a considerable amount of alarm among those who had offices in the vicinity of the tragedy. It was rumored that some mysterious inquiries were being circulated around London banks. It was possible that robbery, after all, had been the real motive of the crime, but robbery on a scale as yet unimagined. The whole interest of the case now was centered upon the discovery of the man's identity. As soon as this was solved, some very startling developments might be expected.

Laverick threw the paper away. He tried to rest upon the sofa, but in vain. He found himself continually glancing at the clock.

"Tonight," he muttered to himself—"no, I will not go tonight. It is not fair to the child. It is absurd. Why, she would think that I was—" He stopped short. "I'll change and go to the club," he decided.

He rose to his feet. Just then there was a ring at his bell. He opened the door and found a messenger boy standing in the vestibule.

"Note, sir, for Mr. Stephen Laverick," the boy announced, opening his wallet.

Laverick held out his hand. The boy gave him a large square envelope, and upon the back of it was "Universal Theater." Laverick tried to assure himself that he was not so ridiculously pleased. He stepped back into the room, tore open the envelope and read the few lines traced in rather faint but delicate handwriting.

Are you coming to fetch me tonight? Don't let me be a nuisance, but do come if you have nothing to do. I have something to tell you.
ZOE.

Laverick gave the boy a shilling for himself and suddenly forgot that he was tired. He changed his clothes, whistling softly to himself all the time. At eleven o'clock he was at the stage door of the Universal Theater waiting in a taxicab.

XX

ONE by one the young ladies of the chorus came out from the stage door, in most cases to be assisted into a waiting hansom or taxicab by an attendant cavalier. Laverick stood back in the shadows as much as possible, smiling now and then to himself at this, to him, somewhat novel way of spending the evening. Zoe was among the last to appear. She came up to him with a delightful little gesture of pleasure, and took his arm as a matter of course as he led her across to the waiting cab.

"This sort of thing is making me feel absurdly young," he declared. "Luigi's for supper, I suppose?"

"Supper!" she exclaimed, clapping her hands. "Delightful! Two nights following, too! I did love last night."

"We had better engage a table at Luigi's permanently," he remarked.

"If only you meant it!" she sighed.

He laughed at her, but he was thoughtful for a few minutes. Afterward, when they sat at a small round table in the somewhat Bohemian restaurant which was the fashionable rendezvous of the moment for ladies of the theatrical profession, he asked her a question.

"Tell me what you meant in your note," he begged. "You said that you had some information for me."

"I'm afraid it wasn't anything very much," she admitted. "I found out today that someone had been inquiring at the stage door about me, and whether I was connected in any way with a Mr. Arthur Morrison, the stockbroker."

"Do you know who it was?" he asked.

She shook her head. "The man left no name at all. I tried to get the door-keeper to tell me about him, but he's such a surly old fellow and he's so used to that sort of thing that he pretended he didn't remember anything."

"It seems odd," he remarked thoughtfully, "that anyone should have found you out. You were so seldom with Morrison. I dare say," he added, "it was just someone to whom your brother owes some small sum of money."

"Very likely," she answered. "But I was going to tell you. He came again tonight while the performance was on, and sent a note round. I have brought it for you to see."

The note—it was really little more than a message—was written on the back of a programme and enclosed in an envelope evidently borrowed from the box office. It read as follows:

DEAR MISS LENEVEU:

I believe that Mr. Arthur Morrison is a connection of yours, and I am venturing to introduce myself to you as a friend of his. Could you spare me half an hour of your company after the performance this evening? If you could honor me so much, you might perhaps allow me to give you some supper.

Sincerely,

PHILIP E. MILES.

Laverick felt an absurd pang of jealousy as he handed back the programme.

"I should say," he declared, "that this was simply some young man who was trying to scrape an acquaintance with you because he was or had been a friend of Morrison's."

"In that case," answered Zoe, "he is very soon forgotten."

She tore the programme into two pieces, and Laverick was conscious of a ridiculous feeling of pleasure at her indifference.

"If you hear anything more about him," he said, "you might let me know. You are a brave young lady to dismiss your admirers so summarily."

"Perhaps I am quite satisfied with one," she said, laughing softly.

Laverick told himself that at his age he was behaving like an idiot; nevertheless his eyes across the table expressed his appreciation of her speech.

"Tell me something about yourself, Mr. Laverick," she begged.

"For instance?"

"First of all, then, how old are you?"

He made a grimace. "Thirty-eight—thirty-nine my next birthday. Doesn't that seem grandfatherly to you?"

"You must not be absurd!" she exclaimed. "It is not even middle-aged. Now tell me—how do you spend your time generally? Do you really mean that you go and play cards at your club most evenings?"

"I have a good many friends, and I dine out quite a great deal."

"You have no sisters?"

"I have no relatives at all in London," he explained.

"It is to be a real cross-examination," she warned him.

"I am quite content," he answered. "Go ahead, but remember, though, that I am a very dull person."

"You look so young for your years," she declared. "I wonder, have you ever been in love?"

He laughed heartily. "About a dozen times, I suppose. Why? Do I seem to you like a misanthrope?"

"I don't know," she admitted hesitatingly. "You don't seem to me as though you cared to make friends very easily. I just felt I wanted to ask you. Have you ever been engaged?"

"Never," he assured her.

"And when was the last time," she asked, "that you felt you cared a little for anyone?"

"It dates from the day before yesterday," he declared, filling her glass.

She laughed at him. "Of course, it is nonsense to talk to you like this!" she said. "You are quite right to make fun of me."

"On the contrary," he insisted. "I am very much in earnest."

"Very well, then," she answered, "if you are in earnest you shall be in love with me. You shall take me about, give me supper every night, send me some sweets and cigarettes to the theater—oh, and there are heaps of things you ought to do if you really mean it!" she wound up.

"If those things mean being fond of you," he answered, "I'll prove it with pleasure. Sweets, cigarettes, suppers, taxicabs at the stage door."

"It all sounds very terrible," she sighed. "It's a horrid little life."

"Yet I suppose you enjoy it," he remarked tentatively.

"I hate it, but I must do something. I could not live on charity. If I knew any other way I could make money, I would rather, but there is no other way. I tried once to give music lessons. I had a few pupils, but they never paid—they never do pay."

"I wish I could think of something," Laverick said thoughtfully. "Of course it is occupation you want. So far as regards the monetary part of it, I still owe your brother a great deal—"

She shook her head, interrupting him with a quick little gesture. "No, no!" she declared. "I have never complained about Arthur. Sometimes he made me suffer, because I know that he was ashamed of having a relative in the chorus, but I am quite sure that I do not wish to take any of his money—or of anybody else's," she added. "I want always to earn my own living."

"For such a child," he remarked, smiling, "you are wonderfully independent."

"Why not?" she answered softly. "It is years since I had anyone to do very much for me. Necessity teaches us a good many things. Oh, I was helpless enough when it began!" she added with a little sigh. "I got over it. We all do. Tell me—who is that woman, and why does she stare so at you?"

(To be continued)



WIFFE—I think that unusually handsome men are always conceited.
HUSBAND—Oh, but I'm not!

SEEING NEW YORK THROUGH OPERA GLASSES

By GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

IT costs one dollar to "see New York" from an automobile as it actually is, and it costs two dollars to "see New York" from an orchestra seat as it actually is not. Which, if nothing else, explains why some men who might have made good chauffeurs have become bad playwrights. There is a more copious remuneration in Camembertian typewriters than in less smelly gasolene. There are more rupees in one play of *New York*, by New York and *for* Chicago than in ten rounds of the Bowery, Chinatown and the Ghetto. Why? Because nothing is dearer to the theatrical heart of the rest of the United States than a dramatic exposition of the pseudo vice, wickedness, peccancy and degradation of the ordinary, normal but overgrown city that crowds the island of Manhattan.

Born in Indiana, I hold no supererogatory brief for New York, yet an inborn sense of something—maybe humor—brings about a resentment of this prevailing and apparently eternal metropolitan dramatic damnation—the same sense probably that has caused a sympathetic and pitying heart to go out in turn in successive cycles to maligned and twitted Oshkosh, Kalamazoo, Philadelphia, Pittsburg and Hoboken. Some day undoubtedly, long after you and I have looked natural for the first and last time, a doughty, fearless dramatist will write a play of "New York life" in which there will be no illegitimate offspring, no erring and repentant mother, no seducing stockbroker, no corrupt business man, no evening-clothed mas-

culine home wrecker and, ah, me—no rooned girl. Or, impelled to employ characters of this species, the heroic dramatist will make bold to attribute them and their sex gymnastics to "Cincinnati life," to "Kansas City life" or to the life of a community other than that which is now theatrically regarded as the great and only American sin center. As matters stand today, it is a case worthy the attention of a Society for the Prevention of Dramatic Crime.

"*NEW YORK*," one of the latest plays of so-called "New York life," from the brain of Mr. W. J. Hurlbut, presents the usual morphometric assay of West Forty-fifth Street emotions, and reaches its climactic explosion in the second act, when one of the agonized lady characters in the entertainment shrieks the word "Rape!" into her gentleman friend's face. The presentation, accordingly, has been characterized by the management, ticket speculators and other students of dramatic art as "a vivid, vital and thrilling picture of metropolitan existence." Lest out-of-town blood still sense a consistent verisimilitude in the hysterical exposition, let there be chronicled the plot fact that a New Yorker's New York sweetheart, to keep the New Yorker's illegitimate and dissolute son from meeting his drunken, gutter soiled New York mother, goes to the young fellow's room late at night, is made the victim of an attempted assault on his part and kills him.

If out-of-town blood still remains doubtful, a further review of the play

will be discontinued in favor of a statistical citation of railroad fares from various outlying points to the metropolis.

"THE PENALTY," by a new playwright named Colwell, is another of these "New York life" things. A young New York man learns that his mother, a divorcée, is being patronized to the extent of numerous thousand-dollar cheques by a New York "society man." Determined to know the truth, he rushes into his mother's room at midnight and demands an account of her morals. Just as he is approximately convinced that his parent is "clean," the door opens and the New York "society man" enters. The mother's guilt is at once apparent and, lest there be some lingering doubt in the matter, there is permitted to take place an odious dolichuric disquisition on D'Annunzian sexuality. The New York mother then shoots the New York "society" traducer full of thirty-two calibre holes and finishes things in a tidy manner by committing a typical New York suicide. After that I went home, washed out my mouth with listerine, took a good hot bath and felt considerably relieved.

"REBECCA OF SUNNYBROOK FARM," adapted by Charlotte Thompson from Kate Douglas Wiggin's book, is a distinct relief from these legionary plays of "New York existence." Its story, known to every nursery in the land, is simple, sunny and lovable, and through Miss Edith Taliaferro's entirely charming person is made doubly captivating in the stage presentation. I recommend this play to any and every playwright who believes that the only way he can hold an audience's attention is through the fashioning of "big" scenes in which somebody suddenly discovers that somebody else has coppered the Ten Commandments.

THE New Theater's production of Maeterlinck's delightful poetic whimsicality, "THE BLUE BIRD," is one of the finest accomplishments of the present theatrical season. The search of Tyltyl and Mytyl, the poor woodcutter's children, through the land of mem-

ory and the kingdoms of the past and future for the symbol of happiness, with the final discovery of its unsuspected presence in their own humble home, is revealed through a pen dipped in rare imagination and inspirational poesy. The staging, while unpardonable in its frank artificiality in the instance of the graveyard scene, is generally indicative of a keen and creditable artistic sense. Just why the New Theater should have used spotlessly white doves to depict blue birds, however, when any number of a sufficiently cerulean hue might have been caught at noon any day in Madison Square, is a source for wonder. But have done with quibbling! The New Theater through its presentation of this play emphasizes its *raison d'être* and again and further justifies itself fully in the minds of those dramatic commentators who have championed its cause. A deeper attention to dramas of American making must, however, be once more urged upon it. Otherwise—but let us wait!

DAVID BELASCO is a wizard! If I have doubted it in the past—and there have been times when I have doubted it very seriously, despite the fact that it was constantly being dinned into my eyes and ears by the newspaper advertisements and the individuals who are prone to judge dramatic achievement through the daily footnotes rather than the nightly footlights—if I have doubted it, I doubt it no longer. I have seen "THE CONCERT"! I have sat through this not at all extraordinary Bahr comedy; I have been enchanted; I have marveled—and I have been won over. I am ready to forgive Mr. Belasco his every previous producing sin and take his erstwhile press agent-given compliment unto my own pen and transfer it freely and unequivocally to the genius who has placed on the stage of the theater in West Forty-fourth Street this well-nigh flawless, completely entrancing theatrical product. "THE CONCERT" is a gem. Without the Belasco touch it might have been little more than a germ. The comedy unfolds the story of Gabor Arany, a pianist whose

"artistic temperament" registers about one hundred and four degrees in the shade, and the manner in which his patient wife gradually manages to cool his blood, to influence him to abandon his "private concerts," which in reality are merely love duets in a cozy Catskill bungalow, and to bring him back home to his regular meals, his hair tonic and her own appreciative, understanding self. Leo Ditrichstein and Miss Janet Beecher, in the leading roles, are splendid; and the entertainment as a whole is worth double the taxicab fare.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Robert H. Davis is a friend of mine, honesty compels me to state that his play "THE FAMILY," produced at the Comedy Theater by the Messrs. Shubert, was not only thoroughly interesting, but a very good piece of dramatic workmanship as well. The fact that it did not succeed financially in New York proves nothing. "An American Widow," one of the brightest of recent comedies, failed utterly last year. "The Upstart," a play of deep humor and novel ideas, and "Bobby Burnit," a highly amusing business farce, failed this year. Failure or success sometimes spell little in themselves from the viewpoint of genuine intrinsic merit. Sometimes from any other viewpoint! Theatrical taste is a gamble, like horse racing, matrimony or any other form of sporting entertainment. "THE FAMILY" exploited the thesis that a young girl who has sinned should be brought back home, forgiven and guarded against further temptation and consequent degradation. The play was presented by a company including John Westley, Samuel Edwards, Thomas Meighan, a dog and Miss Mabel Bert. Messrs. Westley, Edwards and Meighan were very good; the dog was "adequate," and Miss Bert was dreadful. The crux of the play, turning on the brother's discovery of his sister's betrayal and his wild determination to kill the man who wrought it, with a mother's impassioned pleas battling to dissuade him, while reminiscent of the "Don't shoot, Tom; it's my heart you're aiming at!" climacteric

episode in "The Heart of Maryland," brought an honest thrill.

"THE LITTLE DAMOZEL," written by Monckton Hoffe and produced by Henry W. Savage, is an agreeable and stimulating vignette of an episode in Bohemia, the little land of nowhere and everywhere that smiles persistently at the efforts of cynics to envelop it in derogatory quotation marks. Too many barbarians, alas, are wont to survey the coast of Bohemia from a distance through the glasses of *vin ordinaire*, little realizing, poor souls, that the real, true Bohemia, like the blue bird of happiness, may be found in their own homes. The constitution of the Ununited States of Bohemia is not built up on vulgar *table d'hôtes* and anæmic wine; it alone becomes strong through genuine *camaraderie*, an easy philosophy and love and hope. Bohemia is a land of few divorces and no stomachache. And its little smiles and tears are prettily reflected in the Hoffe comedy with a very gratifying elimination of the usual allopathic dosings of an indigestible sentimentality. What there is of plot tells of the marriage of Recklaw Poole, a "waster," and Julie Alardy, a café waif, of the latter's discovery that Poole was persuaded to marry her by a substantial cheque from a man who wished to get her off his own hands, of the resultant heartaches, and of the manner in which love finally turns the heartaches into smiles. Cyril Keightley, as Poole, and George Graham, as Fitz, his closest friend, present delightful characterizations. Miss Mary Corse, as Sybil Craven, has given some importance to what was considered an insignificant part. The aggravating simpers and agnostic histrionism of Miss May Buckley, obfuscating the role of Julie, give to the play its single dissonant note.

WHEN a very naughty young woman begins to sidle up very close to a very moral young man in a French play and gazes at him just as if he were a delicious maple éclair, one may be quite sure that there is only one thing on the face of this green earth that will save him. And that one thing is an American

adaptation. George V. Hobart and Harry B. Smith are the leading members of our society for the preservation of the virtue of young men in imported musical comedies. Between them they save more musical comedy souls in one season than the Salvation Army could in two. It is truly remarkable! With a few strokes of his pen, Mr. Hobart made Paul Hervé's "Alma" behave; with a few clicks of his typewriter, Mr. Smith reformed "The Girl in the Train"; and, rushing in as first aid to the tempted, Joseph Herbert showed "Madame Troubadour" her proper place. Of the three ladies, the last alone still shows signs of recalcitrance.

"ALMA," with the sub-titular query "Where Do You Live?" is not the same old girl we called on last winter in a little German beer garden uptown. In her present Weber's Theater frame of mind, replying to one of the lyrics inquiring into her telephone number, she protests that "a wedding ring is the only ring that Alma can hear." Before she became converted, we remember that Alma could distinctly hear the ring of gold coins as well. But, mind you, this is merely comment, not criticism. Heavens, no! My attitude toward "ALMA," whether she be morally dressed or undressed, is best indicated by my confession that I have seen and applauded her three times in the German and twice in the English. Her songs, by Jean Briquet, are the most tuneful of the day, two in particular, the Alma waltz and the duet, "Kiss Me, My Love," being especially puckerable. Miss Kitty Gordon is Alma.

"THE GIRL IN THE TRAIN" was heralded as another "Dollar Princess," "Merry Widow" and what not, and eventuated mostly as a what not. The regret of it all is that this palimpsestian presentation might have resulted in a highly meritorious, thoroughly enjoyable entertainment had the general spirit, mode and finish of the hugely successful Continental production been even halfway imitated. The really attractive music has been gargled by asthmatic larynxes and the wit of the

libretto has been largely snuffed out. The physical side of the presentation alone has been approached with a sense of care and artistry. My pen, in keen anticipation and poised to praise, traveled one hundred miles into Pennsylvania to witness the American premier of this European music play. Lest its decision be in possible error, it later be-took itself to the Globe Theater. But if the Philadelphia performance was bad, the New York performance was even worse. "*THE GIRL IN THE TRAIN*" is along decidedly jerkwater lines.

"*MADAME TROUBADOUR*," an operetta from the French, the music by Felix Albini, is a musicianly entertainment rich in persuasive melody, with one exception ably presented, and with no exception disclosing the most pretentious score that Broadway has listened to since "*The Chocolate Soldier*." In a cast of eight, including Van Rensselaer Wheeler, Edgar Atchison Ely and Miss Georgia Caine, Miss Grace La Rue alone is to be charged with incompetency, although, in the opinion of my friend the Chronic Faultfinder, this lady's gowns should be sufficient in themselves to make a good actress out of almost any well formed woman. A gratifying feature of the production is the absence of the usual chorus of sixty—mostly servant girls. Other pleasant features are the absence of solos to the man in the moon, persistent spotlights, soubrette dentistry, pink chorus men with intellectual expressions in misses' sizes, and labeled "comedians." "*MADAME TROUBADOUR*" as it stands is an intelligent entertainment for intelligent individuals. Upon the proportion of the latter depends the length of its run in New York.

Henry Arthur Jones said recently: "A physician of high standing as a specialist in mental disorders has written to me claiming that the recent alarming increase in feeble-mindedness may clearly be traced to attendance at some of our popular entertainments in theaters and music halls." Mr. Jones's friend had undoubtedly studied the effect produced upon various persons by "*THE DEACON AND THE LADY*," during

the latter's week end at the New York Theater.

A DEPLORING of the alleged prevalence of destructive, in place of constructive, dramatic criticism is constantly emanating from the mouths of vaudeville players, immature "stars," cub reporters, theatrical managers whose offerings have been booed and three-sheet lithographers. And what is more, sometimes these persons are justified in their wailings. At other times one would recommend to them and to the souls in agreement with them a cognizance of the fact that demolition and progress—dramatic or otherwise—are now and again paronymous. Guerilla dramaturgy and quicksand theatrical products must be wiped out without the appropriation of dignifying, succoring criticism. The drama, like nature and nations, has its plagues and pests. An agamous, futile, underclass dramatic effort merits not an inch of constructive comment. Like Jersey mosquitoes, the hookworm and the sleeping sickness, speedy elimination is what counts. Why seek to make honey bees out of the first, fishing bait out of the second and a cure for insomnia out of the third? A waste of time and effort, obviously! Nor may one strengthen one's constitution by discovering a remedy for the bite of the mosquito. Such things, like worthless drama, are irritating but hardly dangerous. Neither the human race nor the dramatic race can profit much from the devising of a specific relief. If, however, as in the oppugnant attitude of Bacon, you are one of those who "in all deliberations find ease to be of the negative side, to object and foretell difficulties," I shall be gratified to submit a list of deviscerated plays to you and shall read with a sincere and open-minded appreciation your resultant beneficially constructive criticisms. Contrary to a prevalent viewpoint, however, I cannot agree that Henry Bataille's drama, "*THE SCANDAL*," produced by Charles Frohman at the Garrick Theater, with Kyre Bellew in the leading rôle, merits a quick dismissal. Although the play in its adapted

form failed to meet with approval, it affords a very decent case for a few anti-corrosive suggestions.

The story of the Bataille drama is this: Charlotte Ferioul, wife of an adoring husband and the mother of two children, in about the tenth year of her married life becomes infatuated with a Spanish adventurer named Artanezzo, and succumbs to him and the Platonic Commandment. Ferioul subsequently learns of her faithlessness, but recognizes in his wife the dominant presence and persistence of the love for him and their children, and instead of casting her off, takes her back into his arms, forgives her and turns both his own and her eyes toward the future. Admitting the probability of all this, admitting the worldly validity of the theme and its evolution, the contention is offered here that a married woman with several children and a loving, patient husband who with open eyes flings herself into the arms of the first good-looking young fellow she encounters is a figure for household drama, maybe, but theater drama, never! And, say what you will, the one is *not always* the other. The three essentials of drama have been defined as sympathy, surprise and suspense. Without the first, which was entirely absent in "*THE SCANDAL*," a drama becomes merely a turgid, artificial Jack-in-the-box, generating a repetitive ennui with only an occasional and unconvincing startle. The married woman cannot sin any longer in drama acceptable to American audiences. Time and taste may work a change, but this stands today an arbitrary fact. The transplanted drama in question may be said to have failed to duplicate its foreign vogue in this country for three reasons: first, because it did not take into consideration the new morale with which it ought to reckon; second, because its depressive effect was relieved neither by any glimmer of magnetic or acceptable logic nor stimulating emotional actuality; and third, because the only human, understandable character in the whole presentation was the rascal who wrought all the havoc.

"*JUDY FORGOT*," Avery Hopwood's

first contribution to musical comedy, produced at the Broadway Theater, is a well groomed, vivacious entertainment, including the merry Marie Cahill, the accomplished Joseph Santley, the healthy Truly Shattuck and a number of jests and epigrams that were only moderately mirth provoking when we conceived and incorporated them exactly nine years ago in the undergraduate funny paper at our Alma Mater. We distinctly remember, indeed, that one of these, "Uneasy lies the tooth that wears a crown," brought about our election to the editorial staff. The lines of the play, excepting those written by ourself, are amusing. Silvio Hein's music is nice and soft and hummy; the chorus is chubby, yet agile; and the whole combination makes for pleasant diversion.

THE American flag henceforth will have to get along on its own account as best it can, for Mr. George M. Cohan, its erstwhile custodian, has announced his intention of becoming a playwright. Or rather, to be fair to Mr. Cohan, the public has done the announcing. For, through the dramatization of George Randolph Chester's "Wallingford" stories, this same Mr. Cohan has revealed himself to be quite as skillful with his hands as he has been known to be with his feet. The jig is up for Mr. Cohan. His stage preparation of "GET RICH QUICK WALLINGFORD" shows him to be fully as proficient a builder of brisk farce comedy as either Winchell Smith or James Forbes. The Cohan hand is alone responsible for the incontrovertible victory of the Chester magazine fiction behind the footlights. Its post-nate dramatic digital dexterity, a chiro-graphic clue to which might have been found in any one of the Cohan skits and tune jamborees, has done a sterling bit of prestidigitation in the present instance. Taking the story of the covered carpet tack as his groundwork, Mr. Cohan has evolved a humorous and actually stimulating theatrical entertainment that has registered an uncommonly large success. There is no

call to go into the full plot details of the play here. Chester's characters and their deeds are as familiar to readers of the family magazines as are the white slaves and theirs.

LOUISE LOWELL had four children—a son, two daughters and a husband. And the husband was the biggest kid of the lot. Mr. Butler Davenport, in whose play, "KEEPING UP APPEARANCES," these characters were revealed, was the first native playwright to have recognized the fact that a husband is at heart a child. Unlike the collaborating French dramatists, whose play, "So They All Are," is being shown in Paris at the present writing, Mr. Davenport lacked the courage, however, to treat the husband as the youngster he showed him to be. Had he followed the example set by his astute brother dramatists across the sea, his play would have gained the one touch that, in its very absence, threw across an otherwise human, substantial and in the main well conceived dramatic picture a disconcerting light. In spite of Mr. Davenport's lack of humor, it must be granted that he has disclosed a Fitchian insight into many of the queer twists and *arcana* of the medulla oblongata, and that his play, though all too somber for its theme, was a creditable and not by any means uninteresting work.

THE DESERTERS (*Hudson*)

A good old-fashioned military melodrama with the splendid Helen Ware in the role of a secret service agent.

THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL (*Knickerbocker*)

A romantic melodrama of French Revolutionary times excellently presented by Fred Terry, Julia Neilson and a capable supporting company.

THE GIRL IN THE TAXI (*Astor*)

Another breezy success in the form of a whizzing French farce adapted by Stanislaus Stange.

MY MAN (*Storehouse*)

R. I. P.

MAINLY ABOUT NOVELS

By H. L. MENCKEN

LET us plunge into the novels. A chromatic stack, fully four feet in height, stands between my writing table and the hook from which my Sabbath raiment dangles. First comes "ENCHANTED GROUND," by Harry James Smith (*Houghton-Mifflin*, \$1.50), the priggish history of a prig. With prigs in general I do not presume to make a quarrel. No doubt there is some wise and providential purpose in their creation and survival, however incomprehensible it may be to the healthy human mind. They may be sent into the world to amuse us, as psychical researchers amuse us, or to disgust us, as politicians disgust us, or to weaken our conceit in our species, as evangelists weaken it. Whatever the idea underlying their multiplication, if idea there be, we should at least accept them tolerantly as inevitable features of the human landscape, heaved there by destiny like the rest of us and no more responsible for their peculiar vileness. But to accept them thus is one thing and to revere them is quite another thing. Mr. Smith makes the fatal mistake of revering his prig. He asks us to applaud as a hero a young man so atrociously righteous, so inordinately smug that by contrast with him the average Y. M. C. A. secretary seems a besotted and blaspheming rake.

The name of this prodigy of all the obnoxious virtues is Philip Wetherall, and he is a young architect making his way in New York. Up in the dull New England town whence he has come a fair girl, Georgia Raeburn, devotes her maiden meditations to his perfections. She loves him and he loves her, but duty keeps her at the side of her father, a slow

dying colonel of infantry, and the desire to get on in the world keeps Philip at his drawing board in New York. Presently the city, that Babel, that City of Power, of Opportunity, of Consuming Ambition, of Lavish Seduction—I am quoting the fine writing in Chapter I—presently that Crematory of Youth engulfs him. Specifically, he stops a runaway team, gazes into the startled eyes of (Mrs.) Katrinka Brace, goes home with her, returns the next day, comes back a day or two later, stays pretty late, is overcome by remorse, flees the siren, fights off her further lures—and rushes off to tell Georgia all about it.

Georgia, soaked in the transcendental morality, is overcome by the discovery that Philip is a human being and sends him away in horror, as if he were some loathsome criminal. He himself takes much the same view of his adventure. His conscience tortures him savagely. He fears that he will never live down his felony. He is ruined—a male Magdalen—a brother to the White Slaves. But in good deeds he finds peace. He rescues a pure young chorus girl from a pack of scoundrels who plot her undoing. He saves a fellow man from the Rum Demon—and discovers in that fellow man the illegitimate son of Georgia's pa! Sensation! Moral hisses! But even out of such a scandal the larger good emerges, for Georgia now forgives Philip for his sins and they are duly made one. A tedious and preposterous story, badly imagined and badly written.

IN "Now," by Charles Marriott, the Englishman (*Lane*, \$1.50), we encounter that exceedingly rare thing—a novel

with ideas in it. The average journeyman fictioneer of the moment seems to fancy that he has done his work when he has manufactured what the canned reviews call an "absorbing" plot. His characters are mere shapes in the flat, without souls or viscera. We never catch them in the act of thinking, for the good and sufficient reason that their creator himself is incapable of that act and so cannot depict it or even imagine it in others. That is what ails the department store novel: its author is an ignoramus. He has a certain barbarous talent for devising incredible fables—in which art the imaginative infant and the senile negro are his peers—but he has no capacity whatever for interpreting those fables in terms of human impulse and yearning. In consequence he never achieves a true novel, for the things he writes do not help us in the slightest to penetrate and understand that fascinating but eternally mysterious animal, our fellow man.

But Mr. Marriott is of another sort. He is an interpreter as well as a mere story teller; he has ideas about his characters, and those characters in their turn have ideas of their own. In "Now" we are chiefly diverted by certain apostles of a novel and rather startling philosophy—"the philosophy of *laissez-faire* with a new meaning." They raise a revolt against the incessant fussing, the unending reformations, the tiresome social criticism of the day. Reducing their wants to the irreducible minimum, they find it perfectly possible to satisfy every one of those wants under the present scheme of things, and so they dismiss all proposals for change as so many vacant lunacies. In a word, they refuse to bother—and are happy. But don't mistake this for a polemical novel! Mr. Marriott himself is no evangelist, but a tolerant observer of the human comedy, and he observes acutely and to some purpose. His book is decidedly interesting and unusual.

THAT air of melancholy indecency which I have more than once remarked in the second rate English novels of the day hangs over "THE LONELY LOVERS,"

by Horace W. C. Newte (*Kennerley*, \$1.50). The "powerful" and "dramatic" moment of the story appears when the hero, "John Eldridge Pallion, an orphan of twenty-six," makes two appalling discoveries on his wedding night, the first being that his fair young bride—it is his second venture—is ignorant of those physiological secrets which, according to Mr. Bok, every girl should know, and the second being that his first wife, whom he has thought of as happily drowned, is still alive. A certain theological flavor appears in places. It is now the fashion in England to discuss the great problems of faith in second-rate novels, just as it is the fashion in the United States to discourse ponderously and asininely of "mental suggestion," "thought transference" and other such inventions of the incredibly credulous. More pornography of the hesitating, blushing English sort is to be found in "ATONEMENT," by F. E. Mills Young (*Lane*, \$1.50), in which we have the affecting story of a young woman who seduces an astonished, and afterward remorseful and terrified, Englishman, and then commits suicide.

THE theme of "LEONORA," by Frances Rumsey (*Appleton*, \$1.50), is that of "What Maisie Knew," but Miss Rumsey handles it with a good deal more solemnity and assurance than the sportive Mr. James. Mr. James forsakes Maisie while she yet wears a pigtail, but we follow Leonora through adolescence and into womanhood. A horror of divorce is the *idée fixe* of her life. She hudders at the very thought of sunken ties. And then, alas, she falls in love with the fascinating George Trent, who has a living ex-wife, the devilish Bertha Trevor. What to do? Leonora has to admit that she loves Trent, but she can't force herself to marry him. The thought of that mocker, that death's head, that satanic ex-wife, will not down. "Day and night," she cries, "it's with me; she was your wife!" So she flees—and Trent pursues her. Passion, in the end, triumphs over the fixed idea. "I can be your mistress!" she suddenly exclaims, "panting, quivering

and raising the illumination of her face to his." It is now easy for Trent. He convinces her that being his wife can't be much worse, and pretty soon she falls "on her knees before him, offering him, with outstretched hands, the magnificent surrender of her womanhood." A somewhat depressing tale, but still one showing plenty of merit. Miss Rumsey has a crisp, epigrammatic style, and displays a sense of humor in all places save those wherein it is most needed.

Another brilliant but unpleasant novel is "**THE CREATORS**," by May Sinclair (*Century Co.*, \$1.30). The scene is literary London and most of the personages are writers of books. When we first encounter these scriveners most of them seem to be considering the marriage question. Is it wise for an imaginative writer to marry? Is the creation of works of art compatible with the creation of a personal posterity? Apparently not. George Tanqueray, blind to the lovelight in Jane's eyes, marries a servant girl who has nursed him through pneumonia—and pretty soon finds her such a nuisance that he has to lock her out of his workroom. Jane, on the rebound, marries Hugh Brodrick, a magazine editor—and finds motherhood extremely fatiguing. One of her babies spoils a novel and another one is spoiled by a novel. Laura marries Owen Prothero, a genius like herself—and he dies miserably of tuberculosis pulmonalis. A sad business all round! But Miss Sinclair knows how to write. She has a hand for effective dialogue; her grip upon her characters is firm; she knows the London she is describing.

THE HOUSE OF BONDAGE, by Reginald Wright Kauffman (*Moffat-Yard*, \$1.50), is that it comes half a dozen years after Theodore Dreiser's "*Sister Carrie*." With Mr. Dreiser's extraordinary book you are probably familiar; it is one of the most thoughtful and impressive novels in our latter day literature. The difference between the two books is made insistent by the fact that both presume to deal with the same thing—that pres-

sure of poverty, ignorance and childish romanticism which pushes girls of the lower working class toward prostitution. Mr. Kauffman's method is melodramatic; he deals with the obvious externals of the problem—with police corruption, for example, and the cheap theater and the organized merchenting of women. Mr. Dreiser's method is quieter, more philosophical, more incisive; he is chiefly concerned, not with the machinery of vice, but with that intricate play of impulse and yearning which gives vice its victims. But Mr. Kauffman has written a serious novel in a serious manner; he has made an honest effort to put real people into it; he has cast aside the stuffed dummies of conventional American fiction, with their banal love making and their incessant automobiling, and endeavored to set before us a phase of city life which deserves the solemn consideration of all of us. There are faults of execution, but the book shows earnestness and thoroughness.

"**THE DOCTOR'S LASS**," by Edward C. Booth (*Century Co.*, \$1.50), is a well oiled, smooth running love tale of the fashion of 1875. A number of essentially Victorian weaknesses, such as the sentimental use of the present tense, give it a quaint, archaic flavor. The flavor is the old one of the good-hearted fellow who takes to himself an adopted daughter, falls head over heels in love with her and then finds the dual role of guardian and suitor extremely trying. The girl's dissolute father and a younger admirer are important figures. The story is far from a masterpiece, but those who like old-fashioned fiction will enjoy it. Another novel without electric shocks is "**THE CRADLE OF A POET**," a delicate and deliberate study of unfolding personality by the English-woman who chooses to call herself Elizabeth Godfrey (*Lane*, \$1.50). "Miss Godfrey" manages to make her quarryman-poet a very real and interesting fellow and to put a lot of good things into her chronicle of his adventures in love and living. Again, in "**THE LEAD OR HONOUR**," by Norval Richardson

(*Page*, \$1.50), one finds the cleanly fiction of an elder day. The hero here is Sargent Everett, a young Yankee who tackles fortune in turbulent Natchez, worst of Mississippi towns. The period is the '30's of the last century and the author gives a good picture of the manners of the time. Is the ending happy? Rather, let us call it sad but glorious. Sargent loves the beautiful Natalia, but kisses her good-bye at the end, and sends her to her worthless husband, while he himself plods on to Washington and to fame.

RIDER HAGGARD next—a voice from the literary tomb! Do you remember how eagerly you read "King Solomon's Mines" when the world was younger—and "Allan Quartermain" and "Nada the Lily" and "She"? And you remember how keenly you felt the outrage when Mr. Haggard took to writing political tracts and books of travel and novels with commonplace human beings in them! Well, in "QUEEN SHEBA'S RING" (*Doubleday-Page*, \$1.50) there is a happy return to first principles. Once more we are in the heart of Africa, among its ancient and forgotten races; once more we deal with stupendous riches and a queen of ravishing beauty; once more we meet Quartermain in the flesh, though now his name is Richard Adams. This book is a second "She," and if you still like that sort of thing, despite the spread of free education and the progress of civilization, you will fairly wallow in it.

From the master to the disciple! The name of that disciple is R. H. Hazard and his composition is "THE HOUSE ON STILTS" (*Dillingham*, \$1.50), a tale in which event follows event with positively staggering speed. Imprudent Mr. Hazard! After landing his castaways upon the island of Gabrielle and dragging them through astonishing adventures and then packing them off safely to the United States, he sets off a volcano beneath the island and blows it to pieces. And now what is he to do about the sequel? Rash man!

Or mere novels—as one may say, just as one says a mere stage play, a mere

American or a mere square meal—there is no end. To the book reviewer they present unusual difficulties, for it is hard work investigating them and harder work reviewing them. They lack any assertive quality. They are neither good enough to inspire enthusiasm nor bad enough to provoke revilement.

To this honest rank and file of current fiction belong "THE OLD FLUTE PLAYER," by Edward Marshall (*Dillingham*, \$1.50), a novelization of a one-act play by Charles T. Dazey, the eminent author of "In Old Kentucky"; "THE MAN AND THE DRAGON," by Alexander Otis (*Little-Brown*, \$1.50), the story of an heroic young journalist's battle with political corruptionists; "HEARTS ATOUR," by Edith Chetwood and Edward P. Thompson (*Evening Post*, \$1.50), a chronicle of travel in England, with tedious love making interspersed; "THE DOUBLE CROSS," by Gilson Willets (*Dillingham*, \$1.50), a red hot yarn of Mexican adventure, with a pair of Latin heroines; "Too MANY WOMEN," by some person or persons unknown to the jury (*Stokes*, \$1.25), an amusing account of an English bachelor's long, bitter and unsuccessful battle against matrimony; "THE YARD-STICK MAN," by Arthur Goodrich (*Appleton*, \$1.50), a pleasant story of the stock market and honest love; "IF DAVID KNEW," by Frances Aymer Mathews (*Dillingham*, \$1.50), the thrilling tale of a society woman who goes in for morphine and of a rascally medical gentleman who tries in vain to steal her from her unsuspecting husband; and "THE STEERING WHEEL," by Robert Alexander Wason (*Bobbs-Merrill*, \$1.50), a comic treatment of the war between Socialism and Capitalism, with an amour thrown in for good measure.

To a rather more pretentious class belong "THE SWORD MAKER," by Robert Barr (*Stokes*, \$1.25), an historical romance born ten years behindtime, with the scene laid in medieval Germany; "THE LOST AMBASSADOR," by E. Phillips Oppenheim (*Little-Brown*, \$1.50), a tale of mystery into which

Mr. Oppenheim has put all his customary thrills; "THE STAR GAZERS," by A. Carter Goodloe (*Scribners*, \$1.00), in which a young American girl goes to Mexico to forget one lover and there finds another; "FORBIDDEN GROUND," by Gilbert Watson (*Lane*, \$1.50), an unusual and interesting tale of peasant life in wild Albania; "MOLLY MAKE-BELIEVE," by Eleanor Hallowell Abbott (*Century Co.*, \$1.00), the diverting story of a lonely fellow, tortured by rheumatism, who buys consoling letters from a letter writing syndicate and then falls in love with the very human young woman who actually writes them; and "MASTERS OF THE WHEATLANDS," another of Harold Bindloss's vigorous stories of the great Northwestern wilderness, with plenty of love making and adventure (*Stokes*, \$1.50).

IN "DOWN HOME WITH JENNIE ALLEN," by Grace Donworth (*Small-Maynard*, \$1.50), we come upon b'gosh humor which quickly grows fatiguing. Whatever laughs are in it are engendered either by misspelled words or by grotesque and incredible distortions of the language. Yet Miss Donworth does not hesitate on occasion to turn her bucolic ignoramus into a soaring poet and subtle philosopher. "LOVE IN THE WEAVING," by Edith Hall Orthwein (*Broadway Pub. Co.*, \$1.50), bears the marks of the amateur upon every page. It has been advertised under the startling caption, "Beats Three Weeks," but there is really nothing alkaline in it. The new Williamson book is called "THE MOTOR MAID" (*Doubleday-Page*, \$1.50), and its principal scenes are laid in the Riviera. Every reader is familiar with the high social position of the Williamson personages, with their habit of motoring through beautiful lands and with their dashing manner of making love. "THE PEACOCK OF JEWELS" (*Dillingham*, \$1.50), is a detective story in Fergus Hume's most elaborate manner, with amazing entanglements and thrills in plenty. There are more thrills in "BUCKY O'CONNOR," by William MacLeod Raine (*Dillingham*, \$1.50), and "THE REFUGEE," by Captain Charles

Gilson (*Century Co.*, \$1.25), the former a melodrama of the great Southwest, with gun play in nearly every chapter, and the latter a tale of the English coast in the great days when all gentlemen carried horse pistols and dressed like Chauncey Olcott.

"THE GOLD BRICK," by Brand Whitlock (*Bobbs-Merrill*, \$1.50), is a collection of twelve short stories of political life, most of which depict battles between rings and reformers. Mr. Whitlock writes with the sure knowledge born of sitting in the game, and his politicians are a good deal more real than those of the average muckraking novel. Even his reformers are substantially human. The style of his writing is chiefly conspicuous for its straightforward simplicity, a quality found at its best in the higher sort of newspaper reporting.

"TROPICAL TALES," by Dolf Wyllarde (*Lane*, \$1.50), is a collection of short stories of decidedly uneven merit. The best of them is "The House in Cheyne Walk." Its manner recalls, though somewhat vaguely, Anthony Hope's "The Philosopher in the Apple Orchard"; it has delicacy and atmosphere and shows a good deal of skill. In "NEW FACES," by Myra Kelly (*Dillingham*, \$1.50), there are eight stories. The best of them, perhaps, is the opening story, "The Play's the Thing," a diverting account of an East Side settlement club's struggles with "Hamlet." Admirers of Miss Kelly will of course want this posthumous book, but she will be most pleasantly remembered for her first volume, "Little Citizens." In "BREEN VILLAGERS," by Beulah C. Garretson (*Broadway Pub. Co.*, \$1.00), the twelve stories deal with the outlandish characters of a small New England town. The same ineptness marks the nine tales in "THE TRAIL OF A SOURDOUGH," by May Kellogg Sullivan (*Badger*, \$1.50), the scene laid in Alaska. Finally comes "THE HICKORY LIMB," by Parker H. Fillmore (*Lane*, 50 cents), a well written and amusing comedy of child life, with excellent pen drawings by Rose Cecil O'Neill.

A NEW poet who shows a great deal more promise than the average debutante is Thomas Durley Landels, author of "VISIONS" (*Sherman-French*, \$1.00). Mr. Landels is at his best in amorous lyrics; he knows how to manage a refrain effectively and he senses the artistic value of simplicity. His more ambitious efforts are less interesting. I use the term "more ambitious," of course, as mere critical slang. In point of fact, the writing of good love songs is an enterprise ambitious enough to enlist any poet's best efforts. Let Mr. Landels be made welcome; his summons to strum the harp comes from the foothills just below Parnassus.

IN "EVA'S CHOICE," by Leda Gano Browne (*Cochrane*, \$1.00), I detect no summons at all. The verse of this poet is highfalutin' and absurd. In "POEMS OF TRUTH, LOVE AND POWER," by William Lee Popham (*Broadway Pub. Co.*, \$1.50), we come to downright balderdash. A portrait of the author graces the volume, and we are informed that he was born upon the blue steppes of Kentucky in 1885 and that he began life as a plowboy. But today, "by the strokes of his pen and the delivery of his lectures he commands the attention of anxious thousands. He spends his time in giving expression to beautiful sentiments and helpful thoughts to calm the waves in life's great ocean." Oh, noble youth! Of his merits as a minnesinger the publishers discourse shamelessly in a preface signed, "Very respectfully, Broadway Publishing Company." From this we learn that the abominable flapdoodle following "kisses the beauty land of flowers, love, womanhood, music and art," and that it is "affectionate, romantic and dreamy." It is, in brief, the kind of stuff that wrings tears and guffaws from the hinds who patronize Chautauquas.

A FINE poem by Lizette Woodworth Reese gives distinction to "EDGAR

ALLAN POE," a memorial volume printed by those women of Baltimore who are trying, apparently in vain, to raise a fund for a new monument to the author of "The Raven." The rest of the volume (*Warwick-York*, \$2.50) is given over to reprints of the addresses delivered at the Poe centennial celebration at the Johns Hopkins University in January of last year, and to a brief life of the poet by Mrs. John C. Wrenshall.

Why anyone should want to erect a monument to Poe is more than I am able to understand. He stands in no danger whatever of being forgotten. Go into any bookstore and you will find his books. All of us have read them and all our children will read them. Personally, I have little liking for Poe's poetry—Miss Reese's pleases me far better—and less for his prose, but it would be idle to deny his influence and vitality. Next to Samuel Langhorne Clemens, he remains the most striking literary figure that the United States has yet produced. Let monuments be put up to commemorate the lives and great deeds of Holmes, Whittier, Lowell, Irving, Ingersoll, Taylor and other such fourth, fifth and tenth raters, who will be forgotten otherwise before the century runs out. But the erection of a hideous marble memorial to Poe strikes me only as a peculiarly offensive impertinence.

WHIRLIGIGS—

by O. Henry.

(*Doubleday-Page*, \$1.20.)

The latest collection of the stories of this wonderful *raconteur*.

PAGES FROM THE BOOK OF PARIS—

by Claude C. Washburn.

(*Houghton-Mifflin*, \$3.00.)

The work of two young Americans, familiar with every byway of the great city. A valuable book of impressions, beautifully illustrated with etchings by Lester G. Hornby.



SHOPPING FOR THE SMART SET

By MARION C. TAYLOR

QUIET a little has happened in the sartorial world in the last month. Things have rather settled in their proper grooves and a great deal of so-called style has been relegated to the scrap heap, the proper place for it.

Last month I spoke of velour hats—just a line or two—and really when I was writing somewhere around the fifteenth of September one saw them in very few shops. A well known Fifth Avenue hatter, possibly the most exclusive men's hatter in town, who shows women's hats, a few furs and an occasional motor or traveling coat, had the largest and best line of them, from tiny ones, aptly called "Peter Pans," to larger rolling sailors, but they were quite uncommon then. In one week's time, not a day over, the city was flooded with them. Every single shop got them and almost every woman wore one. Some of them are very becoming, and for morning wear, stormy weather and any sporting use they are ideal; but this sudden craze for them has resulted in some intensely funny caricatures, for it takes a certain type to wear a very plain close fitting hat with next to no trimming—a little cockade or a rosette of some sort inevitably finishing them off; and you know how difficult it is to persuade most women that they are not the type. So you see them on the Avenue short and tall, thin and fat, all wearing funny little hats which seem to the uninitiated a distinct sign of economy—if they don't learn the price.

I heard two women discussing a third the other day, the former evidently not New Yorkers. As the latter (the type who goes in for the extreme of every so-called fashion) swished past, her head

completely submerged under a tiny velour hat set at an impossible angle with one half-yard quill shooting heavenward in the rear—"startling" was mild for it—the two gasped. One turned to the other and said, "Is that supposed to be good style?" The other sighed and said, "I really don't know, but heavens, I hope not!" I did so want to tell her it wasn't, for it seems such a pity that a woman of that sort inevitably passes for a "typical New Yorker" to out-of-town visitors.

Another craze that has struck town is the butterfly one. Suzanne Talbot sent over a pretty, small, rolling sailor of velvet with a velvet butterfly poised at the rear. It took, and now the city is flooded with butterflies of every material and hue. They alight on gowns, hats, slippers, stockings, fans and it would seem any place that strikes their fancy, which occasions some remarkable results.

The newest color success abroad is a sort of plum, dull and dark. Little of it is seen here so far, but it will probably show itself soon.

Parisians are also wearing black satin coats with large revers and collars in the afternoon, and I notice a few of them being worn over here. We are essentially a nation of "tailor suit" effects, and it is hard to get Americans to take any style that is so very different; but the last few seasons seem to have taught us that we have delightful possibilities in many other lines, and where four or five years ago one saw mostly suits and fancy blouses at luncheon and tea, one invariably sees now gowns with charming semi-loose outer wraps, the suit having been relegated to its proper

place, for real morning wear, walking and shopping.

I presume it sounds almost provincial for me to say that I do not care for many of the theater caps that one sees on every hand, and that is one reason that I have neglected speaking of them before, but in spite of their becomingness, which is undoubtedly their *raison d'être*, I cannot become enthusiastic over them. The idea originated with a boudoir cap, and as such it was a delightful if extreme fashion. No matter how foolishly feminine a fad may be, it is not out of place, if becoming, in the confines of one's home. The intimacy of the occasion warrants anything that adds to one's attractiveness, but it is a long jump from that to the publicity of theater wear. Then, too, I think the little mob caps one sees look most inappropriate with many frocks, demanding some youthful style to complete the effect they suggest. The plea for them is that when one removes the hat the hair is usually mussed and a cap of this description hides this. Possibly it does, but I have not seen *one* hat in fifty that looks well on top of these little caps, and most of them look really comical to me. I am anticipating some distinctly humorous results if the fashion takes, for not one woman in five is going to achieve a successful combination. However, I think some of the wide close fitting bands, metallic, velvet, etc., with occasionally a line of brilliants of tiny varicolored roses on either side, are very becoming and smart when one does not wear a hat, and I imagine they will have quite a vogue here as they have already had abroad. One of the most exclusive apparel shops is showing a lovely line of them.

A Charming Negligée

In the same shop they have the most marvelous negligées, of which I intend writing more fully in a month or so. One I *must* mention now is of the popular warm crinkly silk fabric called Zanana cloth. Usually one is forced to be content with rather plain and decidedly uninteresting models in this fabric,

but Drécoll's have interested themselves in its possibilities for charming negligées and the result is a model with soft chiffon insets and revers and delightful introductions of valenciennes lace to soften it and a little Venise lace to smarten it and lend dignity. It is so far ahead of anything I have ever seen in that line that I determined to find space to tell you about it this month.

Parisian Hints

The autumn racing season abroad decided many heretofore hazy points. Velvets fur-trimmed were seen in great number, the newest and smartest effect being combinations of zibeline or raticine and velvet. White velvet is used to a great extent, but I doubt if such an extreme and perishable mode will take over here. Many stripe effects were seen and the vogue for black and white seems still as popular as ever. An example of this is the extensive use of ermine, especially tailless or having the tails at one point in the fur. It is used to trim frocks, for huge scarfs, and in fact in every conceivable way sharing the popularity of mole.

The large capacious hand bags of old time richly woven fabrics suspended by cords and tassels are more in evidence than ever.

Breitshwanz and astrakhan are dividing honors with skunk and opossum for banding frocks, a great many of which show velvet underskirts ankle length, frequently displaying a double tunic of cloth or mouseline often bordered with metallic lace.

A new color which I haven't been able to find over here yet, so I can only repeat what I have heard, that it is new and remarkably becoming, is called pomegranate. Satin *feutrière*, the new heavy satin, is used extensively for suits and wraps, frequently combined with velvet. Bolero coats show a short square coat-tail in back, and are smarter than the hip length coat with very large revers and collars, more in evidence than ever, usually bordered with a narrow band of fur.

Hats

The hatter I spoke of is showing a splendid line of those woolen caps with a round ball on top which are the season's novelty for motoring. They are bound to be worn to death of course, but are nevertheless smart and attractive.

An Avenue fur shop is showing this year a charming line of imported and their own designs in hats and sets of hats and scarfs or muffs or both. The hats show the most artistic effects in color combinations. A large flat taupe color velvet had a crown of natural American opossum—which to my mind is infinitely smarter than the Australian—with a few smart silver rosebuds showing glowing pink centers half hidden in the fur toward the front. A sable bicorn had a sweeping paradise of a soft military blue. A seal turban had two smart American beauty plumes arranged at one side toward the rear, and a lovely round collapsible seal intended for motoring but worn for walking also had a soft tam crown of shirred American beauty satin. A large black velvet had white fox to offset it, and a very smart set was of dyed raccoon and fitch. The round crown of the turbanlike hat, intended to be worn low on the head, was of the raccoon with a band of the fitch at the bottom tying in a flat bow at one side, so well handled that it did not look at all stiff as one might imagine. The muff, a large flat one, had the center part of the fitch finished at the bottom with tails and a band of the raccoon at either end, just the reverse of the hat, you see, and another evidence of the extreme smartness of what we used to call imitation furs, for, as I said last month, the raccoon is dyed to take the place of the now expensive skunk.

Each year people seem to be getting more sensible regarding their Christmas shopping, and we no longer see that mad last moment rush with the never ending "What shall I get her? I *must* find something"—resulting in a hasty selection of a possibly inappropriate gift when just a little forethought might have brought so much happiness to both recipient and the giver. I have noticed

a great many things lately that appealed to me as attractive gifts—novel, not too expensive, and in my opinion deserving a welcome wherever sent.

A Novel Workbag

One was a sewing bag or workbag of an odd design. The soft brocaded silk was shirred on two sticks about fifteen or more inches in length. Over each side ran tiny garlands of handmade ribbon roses in all colors imaginable, and a delicate arrangement of gold gauze ribbon, which idea was repeated in the gold cords which closed it. I saw them in a great many beautiful tones, all of which suggested their French origin. At the same counter (in one of the leading drygoods shops) they show a most interesting collection of French novelties, one of the most delightful collections in town, from those marvelously realistic pincushions representing modish women in the smartest sartorial creations, often grouped about a tea table or reading the latest "yellow back" by the aid of a tiny electrolier on a nearby table, to tiny trays framing a charming print of a miniature.

For Purely "Personal" Correspondence

One of the Avenue silversmiths, whose hand-illuminated monograms I spoke of some months ago, has a novelty in note paper that is bound to appeal to some people I know of. I would not dare state just exactly to whom I am referring, but I can't very well prevent anyone from drawing his own conclusions. It is twice the length of the ordinary correspondence sheet, and folding once, fits into larger envelopes slightly oblong from top to bottom, which immediately suggested to me a Valentine or Christmas card. When I confided this view to the salesman, he very shrewdly suggested that the contents might prove more interesting to the recipient than either of the above mentioned articles. I am still wondering just what he meant.

However, if you should want to write more than you can find space for on one

or two or possibly—but we'll stop right here and state simply that if you would appreciate additional space on a single sheet of note paper you'll welcome it, and they tell me that there is quite a demand for it already—whatever that proves. And *after* the summer season, too!

A novelty in the illuminated monograms is the "aeroplane," which really is quite odd and attractive, suggesting the leading aircraft models in the peculiar designing and grouping of the letters. At another shop they are showing their monograms to match the metallic linings of the envelopes, and these in delightful two- and three-toned effects—bronze greens and soft silvery blues, with a smart shade of a delicate lavender paper, a leading shade for the winter. Note paper of this type is always a suitable gift sure of a welcome, for every woman appreciates the refined delicacy of the work and the novelty of the season's ideas.

Beautiful Linens

This is an age of specialists in all lines, and the idea is nowhere more in evidence than in shops whose entire aim is perfection in one branch of work. Concentrating one's entire energy on a particular point is bound to bring the desired results, and in a beautiful little shop, also on the Avenue, one finds many examples of Italian embroidery and lace that I doubt very much could be duplicated elsewhere in the city. The Italian industries of this sort passed rather unnoticed for a time over here, but lately the Italian Industrial School has given fresh impetus to the wonderful work and taught us to appreciate—or rather to know, for the former is but the natural result—the charm of the delicate work the Italian peasants do. This shop I speak of contains some of the finest examples of embroidery and needle point I have seen, all imported from Italy. But what led me to speak of it is the lovely line of novelties they carry so suitable for holiday gifts, so unique and practical.

One of the finest things I noticed upon entering was a laundry bag of hand-

woven linen in the natural shade, embroidered and showing introductions of lace or needle point. A woman may readily find a place in her boudoir for a bag of this sort. It is far too attractive to hide away in a closet, and its durability is another thing in its favor, for there is no wear-out to these linens. I have seen no end of laundry bags, but never one in better taste for any home nor more practical.

Another novelty they show is a "tea cozy" of the same hand-woven linen similarly treated and encasing a padded satin lining which may be easily removed when one wishes to wash the linen.

Boudoir pillows of Italian embroidery are still quite uncommon, and no matter how many of these pillows one has one always finds a place for another beautiful one. I saw also motifs of needlepoint from the smallest to the largest to put in pillows of one's own handiwork. These are hard to get in town. One can find plenty of lace ones, but few if any of the needlepoint.

Wedding cake boxes were covered with the linen embroidered and lace-edged, the cover tying down with satin ribbons. Could anything be a more charming souvenir of a wedding breakfast than dainty conceits of this sort, which might readily find a place afterward on one's dressing table as a button box, or in some similar capacity?

Lovely little candle shades, an odd sponge bag, jewel boxes, a tiny watch case or a scissors case are only a few of the ideas in the gift line which are unique and to be found nowhere else in town.

For the Bride

Nothing pleases a recent bride more than gifts for her home, as is proved when she so frequently makes her husband a birthday present of a cellarette or even a rug or a bookcase when he, poor chap, has been fondly wishing for a new set of vest buttons or a fur coat; and then if he retaliates and gives her a tea service instead of the furs he had in mind, she's delighted, to his amazement, and praises him for his taste.

There are several novelties being shown at present which I think would be likely to please her. One is called a "gravy warmer." Of silver, its idea much like a chafing dish, it has an odd deep egg-shaped sauceboat with a cover and handle, which prevents the gravy from cooling during dinner and may be lifted from the stand and passed by the servants. It is an attractive accessory for the serving table and practical, especially in a small home, as is also a vegetable dish, in reality three round dishes joined in the center by a handle which allows of their being passed at one time, obviating several trips to the side table.

A third table accessory was a "plank dish" of silver, round or oval, having a seasoned board sunk in for planking steaks, fish, etc., which when removed turned the dish into an ordinary covered platter.

A combination grape dish and sandwich tray shows the flat tray having a design of grapes around its outer edge and an upright silver handle in the center with hooks near the top upon which to hang the grapes, also making a suitable dish for attractively arranging fruit. This handle unscrews, leaving a sandwich tray with only a tiny hole in the center which the inevitable doily hides.

The newest bread boats and sandwich trays have silver handles, giving them an attractive basketlike effect.

For the Bachelor

It seems to me, from a feminine point of view, that the hardest person to find a suitable gift for is the typical bachelor "man about town," whose collection of useless scarfpins, match safes and flasks proves the point.

I've had him in mind as I've been looking about recently, and I have come across a few novelties that may possibly escape the usual fate of gifts from admiring femininity.

One little novelty I saw the other day seemed to have several points in its favor. It was a pierced silver basket-like stand with a handle, which held a fat little juglike decanter of rock crys-

tal with a wide mouth into which fitted a tiny glass-corked bottle acting as a cork to the decanter. Over this was inverted a tumbler. The whole wasn't over eight to ten inches in height. It puzzled me a little at first. I had been told that it was intended to be carried to the bedside for a last "night cap," and the question arose—*Why* the little bottle? Was it intended for the liquor, and the larger one for water? If so, I doubted for its success. However, when I learned that the purpose of the little bottle was to measure the proper dose, although I still thought it apt to be used only occasionally, I concluded that the whole affair was a promising possibility in the gift line.

I saw a wallet or letter case in another shop that had several points in its favor. It opened like a book, had one closed and one open pocket, and at the outer edge of the latter two tiny square compartments for stamps on either side of one for cards. It also had the usual secret compartment for bills. It came in a great variety of leathers, lizard being a favorite of mine, with gold or silver corners. A man's wallets are always wearing out sooner or later, and a practical one of good leather is a sensible gift.

A new leather cigar case has an extra outside pocket for memoranda, and a comparatively new belt of leather has a convenient buckle of either silver or gold, which holds the belt in place by a slide instead of prongs and eyelets. A smart frame comes in lizard skin and other leathers, and has a rim of gold or silver next to the glass, which distinguishes it from most leather frames.

Most men use in summer the lapel watch chain with the flat button at one end. These in gold or the newer combination of platinum and gold are not in every man's possession. Pipe cleaners of gold, with the tiny blades, spoon and pick, might please a particular chap who appreciates such niceties, as might also gold spurs.

Evening sets of studs, cuff and vest buttons are a wise choice if one is acquainted with the needs of the man in question. Mother of pearl, with plat-

inum rims and centers, are smart as well as conservative, many men preferring them to the more showy gem-studded ones.

One shop in town is showing a wonderfully complete stock of the newest and most unique things in the way of combination matchbox, ashtray, cigar cutters, etc. Europe has been thoroughly scoured for novelties with most interesting results. The newer ideas seem to run toward crystal and nickel effect, with a dirigible balloon made of nickel, which when stocked with cigarettes cleverly drops them one at a time when needed; and a marvelously perfect monoplane of nickel and glass, the center part an ash tray, the wings boxes for cigarettes, and the front part for matches, would appeal to the younger men who welcome novelties.

The season's cigarette boxes emphasize the craze for enamel, the newest being a smart check, as do also tiny pencils of the colored enamel. I saw also what are known as magazines for cigars and cigarettes. They are large cases of leather to carry them compactly when traveling, and struck me as being something in the gift line that one would not immediately think of. They show many very new and good effects in leather cigarette cases in this same shop and no end of splendid desk accessories.

Then I saw, by way of a novelty, a little case of leather to hold one's watch, and an arrangement of reflector and electric light which would throw a reflection of the face of the watch on the ceiling so one could readily see the time.

But an even better arrangement for night was a new clock called a "Radium," the face of which is phosphorus and can be seen as easily in a perfectly dark room as in daytime. There are novelties in shaving sets, nickel racks holding manicure tools, with a glass tray underneath for buffer and polish and a hundred other convenient devices for men.

• For the Older People

I think the smaller, finer and richer, figuratively speaking, a gift is, the more certain it is of pleasing the older mem-

bers of one's family or the friends one has. There is something in the extreme refinement and exclusiveness of even the smallest gift that appeals to them. If it is only a Christmas card, fragile and delicate in the beauty of its coloring and appealing in its carefully chosen sentiment, it is sure to be appreciated.

One of the leading silversmith's shows a lovely line of them. The smartest cards are double ones, booklike, the outer cover showing quaint holiday designs, the under leaf having one's name engraved from one's card plate, which has come to be the accepted mode.

The covers of these cards show charming designs—one snowy scene had a modern Santa flying over the roofs in an aeroplane by the light of a mother of pearl moon.

But at a little shop a block or two off the Avenue I saw a collection of the most exquisite cards I have ever seen, delicately beautiful hand-illuminated, with charming verses, good wishes and the like. One guesses their Italian origin. I saw here a collection of oddities among which were hosts of possible gifts. Tiny book corners showing a delicate Italian scene, a *bambino* or possibly a Dante surrounded by more of the illuminating, and a dozen other things one wouldn't immediately think of.

Last year this shop got out a line of mottoes, prints and the like—Maxfield Parrish, Guerin and other soft-toned pictures—framed them in odd flat hammered brass frames with celluloid over them instead of glass. They are ideal to send instead of a card, and come in many sizes. The selection is an evidence of the care and splendid taste of the proprietor of the shop.

Little gold necessities are always a wise selection if the needs of the recipient are known. A bodkin set, a traveling inkwell—for few older people use fountain pens—a "housewife" for traveling, which compactly holds three spools, needles and a thimble, a gold crochet needle, or, if the article is used, a saccharine bottle, is also acceptable to young and old. One of the very finest things I saw recently was an eyeglass

case of platinum, quite expensive, of course, and to the careless observer indistinguishable from silver, but a splendid choice for one who appreciates having the best and the newest, for nothing is more luxuriously smart just now than platinum.

Another suggestion for the older friends is a reading glass. I saw them in all shapes and sizes, the glass protected by a leather case. An oddity from London is a card dealer, a little device which as it revolves deals a card to each of the four sides of the table. What next to save labor?

Women's Gifts in a Man's Shop

It seems to me *that* ought to appeal to men—being able to purchase a gift for a woman right in the familiar confines of their own shop without attempting to solve the intricate mysteries of the women's departments in the department stores, to say nothing of getting up sufficient courage to enter a woman's shop. Here in the shop I have reference to are to be found some of the most exclusive imported leather novelties I have seen in town. From complete traveling desks of morocco, so compact, opening up like a trunk and made up in the most attractive colors, to the smallest bags and card cases, many of the former of fancy fabrics as well as leather. I saw there, too, some splendid manicure sets in leather cases for traveling—one which pleased me of a delicate violet levant or crushed morocco with tortoise shell fittings. Everything they show is in perfect taste, so that a man is sure of choosing something acceptable; and what a comfort to find it in a shop he is familiar with!

A Stocking Opportunity

Every year about the first of December one of the leading shops in town has a truly wonderful silk stocking sale, which, coming when it does, is so apropos for holiday buying. The values are remarkable—much under the usual price, and the assortment is so varied one can find almost anything one has in mind. I inquired the other day if they

were going to have one this year, and finding that they were, I decided to mention it here, as I thought it might be a valuable suggestion this shopping season.

The Rise in Artificial Jewelry

Ten or twelve years ago the very term "artificial jewelry" was little known here, although a familiar term abroad, and the more familiar "imitation jewelry" was associated with the forty-nine-cent variety on sale in the cheap drygoods shops and rightfully avoided by women of refinement; but now all is changed. The buyers of artificial jewelry today are the wealthiest and the most refined women in the country, and it is not at all remarkable when one considers the happenings in the world of the creators of such jewelry. I say "creators" quite boldly, for it takes real genius to achieve some of the results they have finally arrived at. I can imagine what would have happened not so many years ago if a woman had been asked a hundred dollars for a string of artificial pearls. Her amazement would have been answer enough. But I saw a string last week that reached about to the waist, with a delicately beautiful clasp of diamonds and reconstructed rubies that had been ordered for one thousand dollars. I admit it does seem startling at first hearing, but when one learns first of the years of patient and expensive experimental research necessary to such perfect results, and secondly, that it was impossible to distinguish between these and a shorter string of real pearls to be worn with them, one begins to appreciate their value. It is the fashion of the moment to wear three strings, one at the neck, one reaching to the waist and a third still longer. Many women possess the first in real pearls, and have the second two matched up in the artificial—matched, too, so perfectly that it would take an expert to detect them.

But, coming down to more practical things, this jeweler, who is a pioneer in his line, has been able to produce this year graduated strings of indestructible

pearls, which is an unheard-of feat. Roman pearls more nearly approached this than any others, but the enamel eventually wore off. These, however, are of a beautiful soft sheen, have a delicate barrel-shaped clasp of brilliants, and are sold cheaper than they ever have been before. Owing to the great demand of pearls this year a necklace of graduated ones in a delicate flesh tone, with a pearl clasp surrounded by brilliants, is being sold at just about half what it could have been bought for last year. Long earrings—tassels especially—as long as four inches, are very smart if becoming. Real pearl earrings, technically known as pearl "blisters," are a distinct novelty and very reasonable, too.

In the Jewelry Line

There are many delightful accessories now being shown in artificial stones that are both refined and attractive. One shop is showing a line of bar pins that in the delicacy of the workmanship closely resemble the very finest jewelry.

Tiny jeweled veil pins are a little known article. Like a hair-pin in shape, they have little ball-like knobs on either end, and are a very useful novelty. Slipper buckles in stones to tone with or match the gown are something one does not immediately think of, but are nevertheless a good choice this season. Lorgnette chains in many new designs are shown here, but one of the most unique ideas of the shop is this. If one sees a piece of imported jewelry one would like, possibly in the collection of a friend but recently returned from abroad, and one has scoured the city in vain for something similar, one has but to come here, and in six or eight days, if Europe is able to produce it, it will be over here for your approval, which is no little proof of the rapidity with which things move in these days.

November Records

Besides singing some new selections, Melba has resung the best of her former successes, and the result is seventeen new records that are in every way an

improvement on the originals. In many cases the accompaniment is vastly superior, and the results show more clearly than anything I know of the strides that have lately been made in phonograph records. Of the new ones, a plaintive melody, "In Vain, My Beloved," from "Le Roi d'Ys," which I believe we are to hear over here this winter, is rather charming. "Se Saran Rose," possibly better known as the "Melba Waltz," by Arditi, displays the marvelous ease and accuracy of her coloratura work, but the three which pleased me most were two from "La Bohème," Mimi's first number, "Mi Chiamano Mimi," and the pathetic "Addio" of the third act, while the Tosca "Vissi d'Arte" gives an idea of her dramatic possibilities.

A Fur Novelty

A new muff which has just been imported is a charming idea for evening wear. It is aptly called the "Judy" Muff, and suggests a Punch and Judy cap upside down with a huge tassel at the bottom. The top shirs up with cords and tassels, and the whole may be carried on the arm when not in use. But its chief charm is in the bag, into which one can put vanity case, gloves, handkerchief, etc., without spoiling its shape.

Another Perfume

So many people seemed interested in the perfume I wrote up in October that it induces me to tell you of another charming one I have recently found. It is slightly less expensive but none the less refined, delicate and appealing. A recent importation from Paris, it has, in the words of its maker, a "delicate persistence that will endear it to femininity at large."

At this same shop they have a new nail powder and a paste that is excellent. It is beneficial to the nails and gives besides a splendid lasting polish.

[Note—Readers of the Smart Set inquiring for names of shops where articles are purchasable should inclose a stamped addressed envelope for reply, and state page and month.]



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The Evening Post, one of the leading daily papers of Cincinnati, Ohio, hearing of Dr. Mott's success, asked if he would be willing to give a public test to demonstrate his faith in his treatment and prove its merit by treating five persons suffering from Bright's Disease and Diabetes, free.

Dr. Mott accepted the conditions, and twelve persons were selected. After a most critical chemical analysis and microscopic examination had been made, five out of the twelve were decided upon. These cases were placed under Dr. Mott's care and reports published each week in the Post. In three months all were discharged by Dr. Mott as cured. The persons treated gained their normal weight, strength and appetite, and were able to resume their usual work. Anyone desiring to read the details of this public test can obtain copies by sending to Dr. Mott for them.

This public demonstration gave Dr. Mott an international reputation that has brought him into correspondence with people all over the world, and several noted Europeans are numbered among those who have taken his treatment and been cured, as treatment can be administered effectively by mail.

The Doctor will correspond with those who are suffering with Bright's Disease, Diabetes, or any kidney trouble whatever, and will be pleased to give his expert opinion free to those who will send him a description of their symptoms. An essay which the doctor has prepared about kidney trouble, and describing his new method of treatment, will also be mailed by him. Correspondence for this purpose should be addressed to IRVINE K. MOTT, M. D., 575 Mitchell Bldg., Cincinnati, O.

FOR WOMAN, CHILD AND HOUSEHOLD.

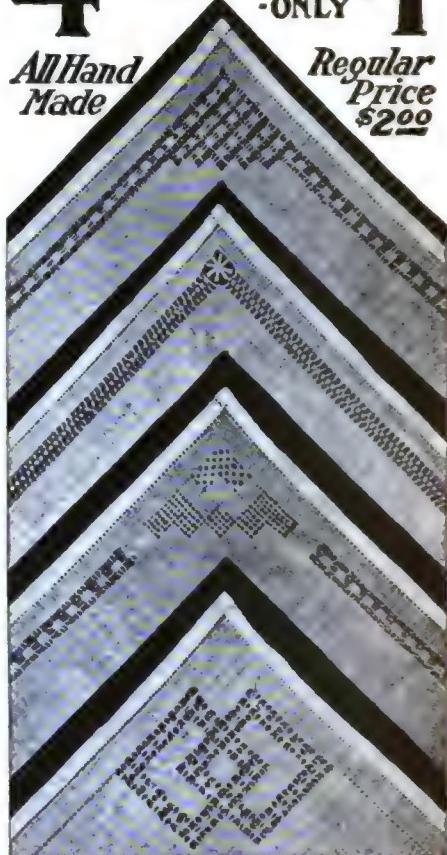


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The Holiday Number of The SMART SET

KEEP a sharp lookout for the January number of the SMART SET—which is to be a special Holiday Number.

We give this as a warning tip, judging from the experience of the November issue, which disappeared from the news-stands so quickly that a great many readers were unable to secure copies at all. Letters poured into this office and the 'phone bell jangled till our nerves got on edge; and we had to issue a public "apology" and a promise never to let it happen again.

The January issue is going to be a masterpiece. We're preparing a little surprise in one respect. We've arranged to— But there! Let's wait. It will keep—and you'll like it all the better when you see it.

The January issue, which will appear on December 15th, will be full of the Christmas flavor. Louise Karr contributes a clever little conceit, "**The Day Before Christmas**," which will strike home to all of us to whom the judicious giving of gifts is not the most easily arranged matter.

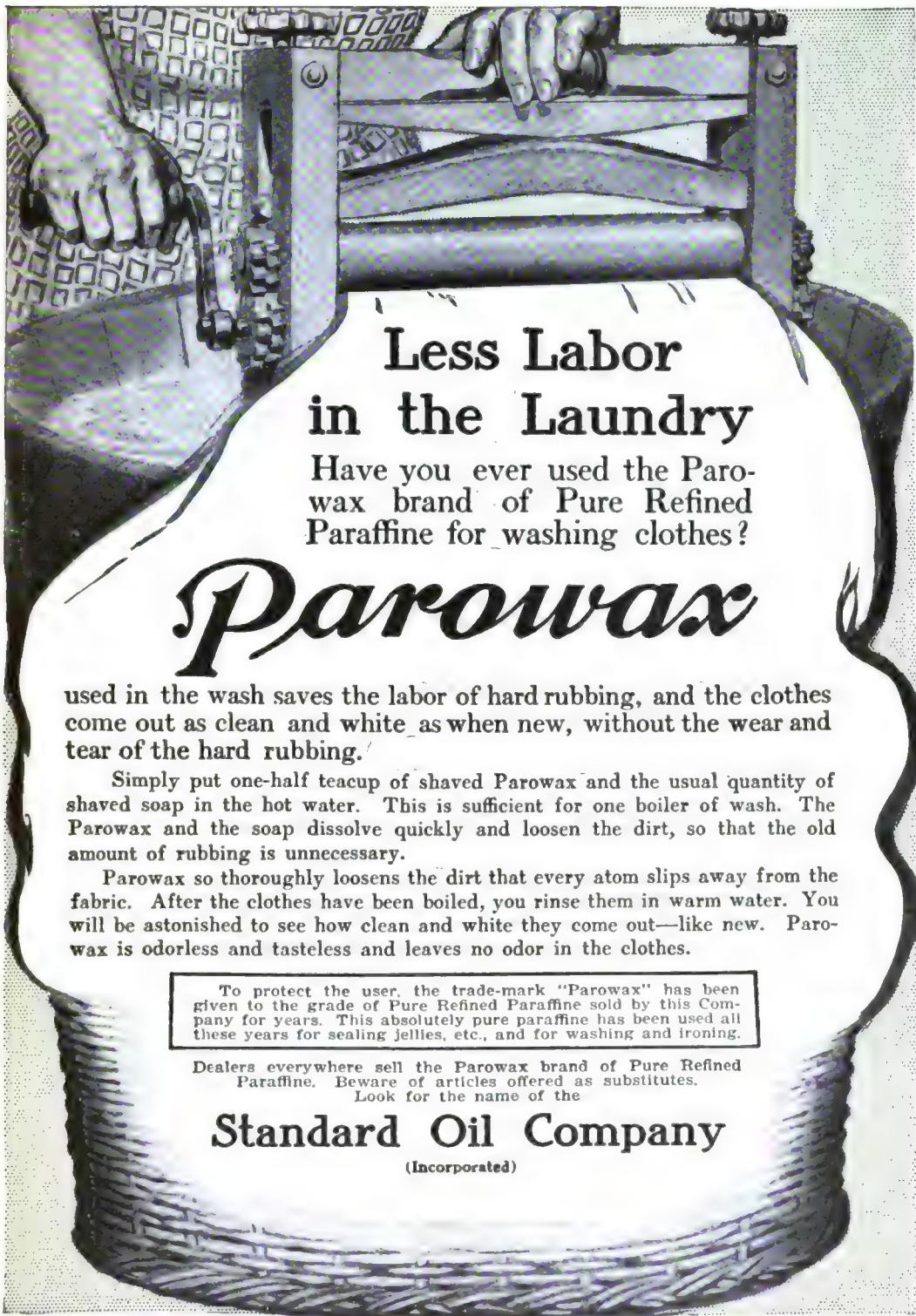
"**The Diary of a Duckling**," by **Fred Jackson**, is a beautiful romance of Christmas Day, a sweet, tender idyl of girlhood simplicity that is perhaps not quite so usual nowadays.

Van Tassel Sutphen's "Force Majeure," one of the cleverest things this writer has ever done, is a romantic tale of masculine might and feminine wiles in the snows of Virginia and New York City—though, to be sure, there's nothing romantic about snow in New York. However, this is a charming story.

Richard Le Gallienne has written for this number a story, "The Astrologer's Daughter," which in its poetic beauty recalls this writer's wonderful "Quest of the Golden Girl." **J. Storer Clouston**, whose stories have attracted so much attention by their subtle humor and insight into human nature, has satirized some of the foibles of society in a new yarn, "How It's Done." **Francis Perry Elliott**, whose novel, "The Haunted Pajamas," lately made such a pronounced hit, has another story, "A Tragedy Deferred," which ends in a surprising manner.

A complete novel, "La Prevosa," by Helen Talbot Kummer; poems by Bliss Carman, Ella Wheeler Wilcox and others; an essay on the art of remaining young by Reginald Wright Kauffman, numerous bright sketches, and E. Phillips Oppenheim's great novel, "Havoc," are among the features planned for the

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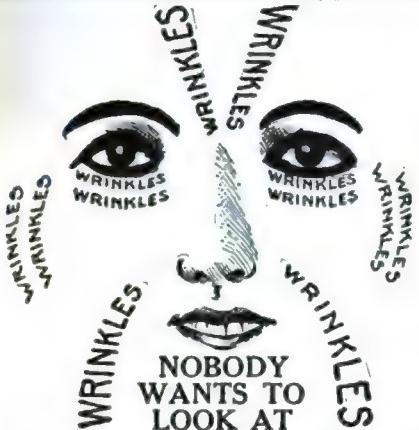
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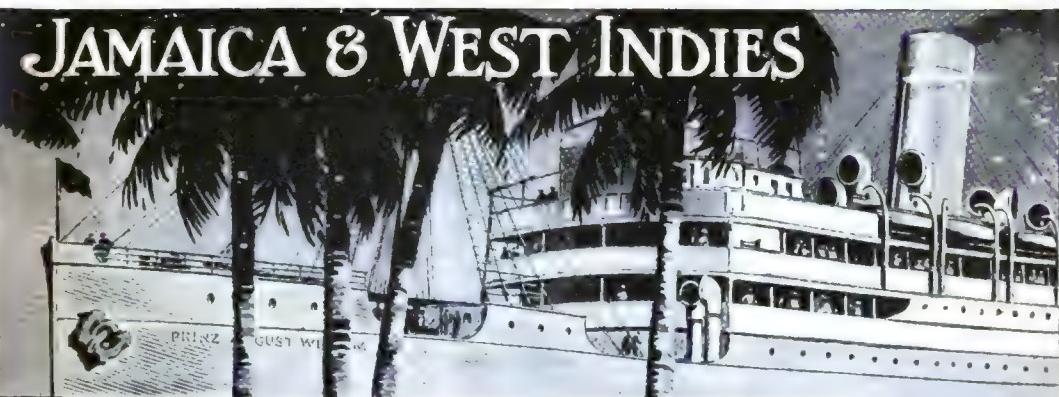
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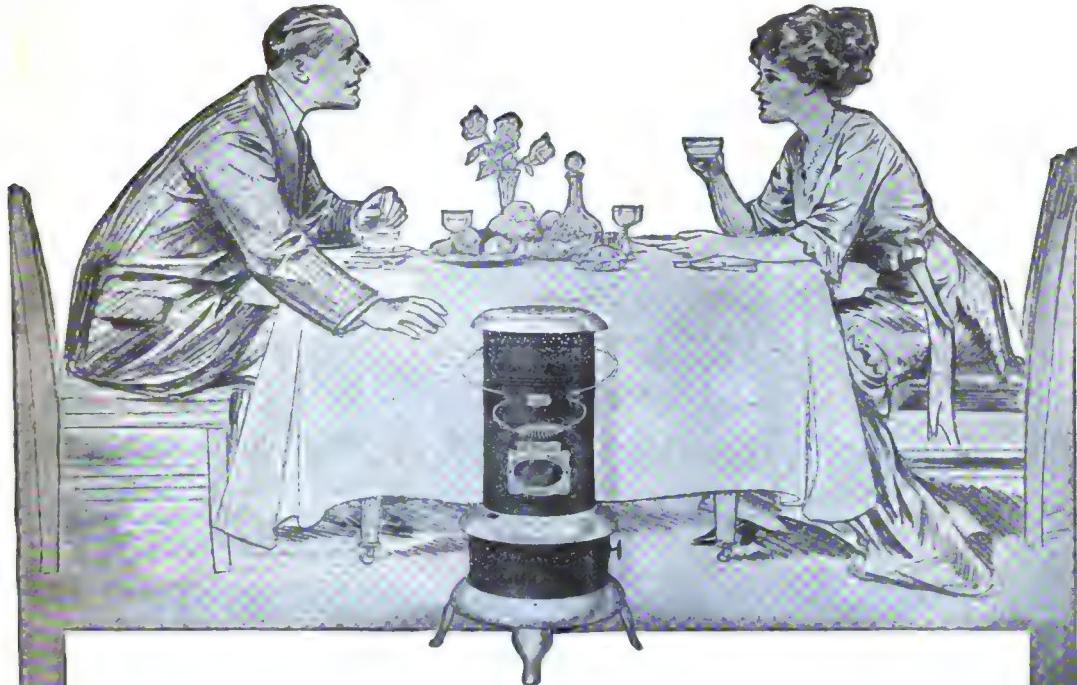
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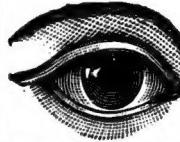
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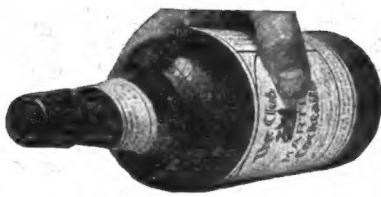
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